LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

CHANUKAH

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

ESSAYS ON PARSHAS CHANUKAH

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Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *Chanukah* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 23 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

"The time of your Redemption has arrived."

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

Chanukah is counted as a Holiday that will survive the test of time. It is prominent now and will even be prominent in the Messianic Age, when the luster of other major Holidays will fade. The Chanukah lights will shine as brightly as ever.

ESSAY ONE

CHANUKAH AND THE LIGHT OF MOSHIACH

True light – the light of the first day of creation; the light of Chanukah – is defined as the ability to see the inner dimension of existence.

ESSAY ONE

CHANUKAH AND THE LIGHT OF MOSHIACH

Hints of Chanukah in Genesis

Chanukah, the festival of light, occurs on the twenty fifth day of the month of Kislev. The twenty fifth word of the Torah is "*ohr*-light."

Is it a coincidence that the holiday of light occurs on the **twenty fifth** day of the month and the **twenty fifth** word of the Torah is light? According to our sages, there are no coincidences in life and certainly not in the Torah. The light that was created on the first day of creation has much in common with the light of Chanukah.

The Torah introduces the way G-d created the universe. First there was darkness and then G-d said "Let there be light." The Midrash comments that "darkness" refers to the way in which the Greeks oppressed the Jews. Accordingly, the statement, "Let there be light," is an allusion to the light generated by the defeat of the Greeks in the days of Chanukah.

Our sages also tell us that the light created on the first day of creation was no ordinary light; it enabled one to see from one end of the world to the other. To prevent the undeserving from accessing this amazing power, G-d concealed this light, preserved it and will unveil it again in the Messianic Age of Redemption. The miracle of Chanukah provided us with a glimmer of this unique form of light.

Greek Darkness

To have an appreciation for this dimension of light and what we have to look forward to when this light will once more envelop the world, we should focus on the nature of the darkness associated with Greek oppression. As stated, our sages interpreted the term darkness as a reference to the Greek form of religious persecution.

It is ironic that the sages would use the metaphor of darkness for the Greeks who emphasized light, enlightenment, culture and knowledge. Greek culture glorified aesthetic beauty. Now Judaism also believes in beauty. Yet the difference is stark. Judaism believes in an inner beauty, while the Greek's reveled in an outer and superficial form of beauty. When people become fixated on the external because they are oblivious to the internal, they are in the dark. Their vision cannot see beyond and within.

The Greeks were not opposed to the Jewish religion, as long as it was limited to its literary, cultural and intellectually challenging aspects. As long as one did not recognize its divine core and the existence of an inner beauty that transcended its outer form, Judaism was as appealing as any other culture. It was the Divine element that Judaism believed in and that which represented the true notion of beauty, that the Greek's resented.

Light and Reality

Light is characterized by its ability to enable us to see reality. Light is not worthy of its name if it gives us a distorted picture. When G-d created the world, He established what His goal was. G-d wanted a world that was filled with the type of light that uncovered the inner beauty and divinity that exists beneath the surface.

Greek culture with its emphasis on the outer form, thus, epitomized the very opposite of the true inner light that G-d created on the first day. And the victory of Chanukah is thus a victory for the power of true light. With the miracle of Chanukah, the world was able to come closer to appreciating the inner light that enables us to see things from within.

Three Distortions of Light

But, seeing beneath the surface is not the only feature that characterized the true light. There are actually three features that distinguish true light from its distorted counterpart. Distorted light, epitomized by Greek culture, is when, as stated, we only see and appreciate the surface and not what is beneath the surface. To truly shed light on a subject one must be able to identify its soul.

Light can also be distorted if it enables us to see only part of a picture, not its entirety. To appreciate anything one must be able to see the context in which it appears. When we look at anything we must realize that it is only part of a larger scheme. At present we can only see one dimension. When G-d's light will shine we will see all the different levels and worlds and then view our world in that context.

Distorted light is also when our vision is limited to the here and now and where we cannot see the way things were and how they will eventually turn out. Putting things in context means, to know their history and to know their future and purpose as well. To witness surgery, for example, without the knowledge that the person doing the cutting is a surgeon and that he is performing lifesaving surgery, is tantamount to seeing nothing.

True Light

True light – the light of the first day of creation; the light of Chanukah – then, is defined as the ability to see: the inner dimension of existence, existence in context of all else that exists, physically and spiritually, and in context of how things were, their intended purpose and how they will be.

What makes the future Age of Redemption so special is that all of us will have access to this light. We will all be able to appreciate the inner beauty and divinity that exists throughout creation. Furthermore we will be able to see things contextually and in proper perspective; as they relate to the rest of creation as well as how they fit into G-d's plan. We will thus be able to appreciate past events that did not necessarily make sense to us because we were only exposed to a limited view of the event.

This Chanukah, as we gaze into the small flickering flames, let us reinforce our belief in the coming of the Moshiach, and in the Rebbe's persistent message that the Redemption is imminent. When we see the pure light of the Chanukah menorah let us reflect on the genuine light and view of reality that will soon illuminate the entire world, and usher in an age of peace and holiness.

ESSAY TWO

CHANUKAH "R" RATED (RESTRICTED)

FOR CHILDREN ONLY

ADULTS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CHILD

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CHANUKAH "R" RATED (RESTRICTED):

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A Children's Holiday

Chanukah is a children's holiday. The very word Chanukah derives from the Hebrew word "*chinuch*" which means education. Whether it is a child - chronologically speaking - or the child within us, Chanukah has a juvenile appeal. Whether it is the Chanukah Gelt children receive from their parents, the sizzling Latkes, the beautiful and mesmerizing sight of the burning candles, Chanukah - with all of its light and joy, song and fun - leaves an indelible imprint on the minds and hearts of every Jewish child.

Of all the Chanukah traditions, the dreidel is the most obvious juvenile oriented one. The dreidel has embossed on its four sides the four Hebrew letters: *Nun, Gimmel, Hei, Shin*. They are actually the initials of the four words, "*Nes gadol haya sham*-A great miracle occurred there," referring to the great miracle of Chanukah which transpired in Israel

over 2,200 years ago.

Moshiach's Dreidel

There is a tradition that the four Hebrew letters of the dreidel, add up numerically to the number 358, which is the same numerical value of the word "Moshiach." (Incidentally, in Israel, the final letter on the dreidel is a *pey*. There the sentence reads: *"Nes gadol haya* ***poh***, A Great miracle occurred **here**." The numerical value of this phrase is 138 which is the equivalent of the name *Menachem*, the name, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b) assigns to Moshiach!)

What connection could there possibly be between the four letters of a children's Chanukah toy and the Jewish belief in the Messianic Age ushered in by the Moshiach? And what can we learn from this association?

Children are the Link

The link between the two, Chanukah and Moshiach, are the children. Chanukah with its emphasis on the youth and the youthful state of our adult existence, is linked with Moshiach, because, children are referred to in the Talmud as Moshiach.

The Biblical words: "Do not touch My anointed ones (*Meshichoy)*," the Talmud (Tractate Shabbos 119b) applies

to children whose innocence and purity help sustain the world.

Moshiach - to be sure - is a person, who will lead the Jewish people and the entire world to an age of goodness and peace. But, our Chassidic sages tell us, every one of us - especially a child - is endowed with a spark of Moshiach. Every one of us has this child-like state of innocence, purity and pristine holiness, which characterizes the Messianic Age.

And what is a child, if not G-d's natural venue for innocence and purity? This child-like spirit of Moshiach was alive and well at the time of creation. When the Torah states: "And the spirit of G-d hovered above the waters," our sages comment that it is a reference to the "Spirit of Moshiach." Before the advent of the human being, with his penchant for corruption and destruction, the world was a natural place for the purity and integrity associated with Moshiach. The world - was in its state of infancy and innocence.

Reclaim Innocence

The goal and objective of the world is not to remain that way, just as one cannot and should not forever remain a child. The purpose of creation was to give the human being

the challenge of re-introducing purity and holiness into a world that is plagued with corruption and evil. The challenge of adulthood is to reclaim the innocence of childhood within the framework of maturity.

Our task as Jews is to be a "light unto the nations," to preserve and regenerate the purity and holiness that existed before people began to soil and despoil the world. There is no time where this mission can be realized as much as it can during Chanukah, where light is not just a metaphor, but a tangible reality.

When we light the Chanukah candles and gaze at the small, but, pure, flames, we are reminded of the message of Chanukah. This message is to find and recapture the Moshiach-purity and light within ourselves, and to allow the whole world to bask in the glow of it.

The great miracle of Chanukah which occurred "there" is not only a reference to the miracle of the victory over the Syrian Greek forces, or the miracle of the lone cruse of oil which lasted for eight days. It refers primarily, perhaps, to the internal miracle which occurred then.

The miracle was that the Hasmoneans acted like children. They could not tolerate the loss of G-dly purity at the hands of the assimilationist's forces which tried to extinguish the internal pure and unadulterated flames of their souls. The Moshiach component within them was

unleashed and the tiny band of Maccabees did not rest until they liberated the land from the encroachment of alien values. Restoring the innocence and re-introducing the pure light of G-dliness which prevailed at the beginning of creation, is the miracle we are celebrating today, because it is *that* miracle which was the catalyst for all the other miracles that followed. And this is the only miracle we can be asked to emulate now.

Igniting the Spark Within Us

Now that "We are standing on the very threshold of the Redemption," and "Moshiach is on his way" - as the Rebbe had told us - we must find ways of igniting the spark of Moshiach within us. We must make the miracle happen within ourselves to hasten and be ready for the miracle that we want to happen throughout the world. Chanukah with its emphasis on children, purity and miracles is a time most suited for achieving this goal.

So when your child asks you to play "dreidel," the "spin" (pardon the pun) you are to place on this innocuous juvenile exercise is that it is an inspiration and challenge to us to find that miracle "there" deep down within ourselves. The spin of the dreidel is about children, purity and Moshiach.

May we all merit to light the Chanukah lights together with the restoration of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem, in a spirit of purity, holiness and true peace.

ESSAY THREE

CHANUKAH: VIVE LE LIGHT

It is not enough for us to realize our natural potential – symbolized by the number seven, the highest number in the natural order.

Even as we light the seventh light, we observe an empty space on the menorah for an eighth light.

It beckons and challenges us to beyond our nature and realize the climax of spiritual light that is symbolized by the number eight.

ESSAY THREE

CHANUKAH: VIVE LE LIGHT

Three Meanings of Chanukah

Chanukah means dedication. Chanukah is so called because the victorious Hasmoneans dedicated the Temple rather than celebrate their military victory over the Syrian–Greeks that was impressive by anyone's standards.

Chanukah is also a construct of two words: *Chanu chaf hei*, they rested or "encamped" on the 25th day of the month of Kislev.

That we observe Chanukah on the day that they rested, rather than on the day that they won their final battle, is once again instructive. They did not revel in their victory but in their ability to live as Jews in tranquility.

Chanukah is also an acronym for five Hebrew words: "*Ches neiros, v'halacha k'Bbeis Hillel*-Eight lights, inasmuch as the law follows the view of the School of Hillel." This is a reference to the well-known dispute as to the ideal manner of lighting the Chanukah lights. According to Beis Shammai-The School of Shammai we begin with eight the

first night and then light seven, six, and so forth on subsequent nights. On the last night of Chanukah we only kindle one. The School of Hillel and the prevalent custom is to do it in ascending order.

What is the crux of the dispute between these two schools of thought?

Diminishing Evil or Increasing Light

According to Beis Shammai, the focus of Chanukah is the destruction and ultimate elimination of evil. After all, wasn't that what the whole struggle against the Syrian-Greek attempt at Hellenizing the Jewish community, was all about? Each night the forces of evil become less potent and hence the need for less light.

Beis Hillel's insistence that we light the candles in ascending order, underscores that despite the greatness of the joy in destroying evil, our focus has to be on increasing light. By giving the Holiday the name Chanukah with the allusion that we follow the view of Beis Hillel, we echo the sentiment that Chanukah is not about defeating evil as much as it is about increasing light.

All three names of Chanukah thus point in the same direction. Our joy is our ability to dedicate ourselves to Judaism in a complete state of tranquility and without the

need to ever look back at the evil forces that we vanquished; but only to increase the light.

Two Approaches to Life

What is the message for our time?

There are two approaches to life. The first approach is to focus on every victory that we experience; every crisis that we avert and every bit of darkness that we dispel. No matter how paltry and pathetic the positive consequences of these victories might be, we show appreciation for G-d's goodness. We should never deny G-d even His slightest show of compassion for us. There is something to be said for savoring the sweet taste of a victory over evil, any victory. The advantage of this approach is that even the most limited change of status is reason to celebrate.

This approach, though necessary, however, has its drawbacks. When a person is content with the joy in overcoming an obstacle, they do not have the motivation to reach the top. They are content with the victory they've won with much effort. This approach is a minimalist approach, because it can make a person happy with but the minimum of achievement.

Alternatively, we can dwell on the positive qualities that we now enjoy. We can savor the taste of generating light,

without relating it to the previous state of darkness. We learn to appreciate good for good's sake.

The benefit of this approach is that no matter how good things were today, human nature demands that we have more tomorrow. When we light the first Chanukah light, with all of the contrast that one light has when compared to no light, we are not satisfied. The next night we generate two lights. We will never be content. And no matter how truly impressive are our positive achievements we constantly strive for more.

Indeed, it is not enough for us to realize our natural potential – symbolized by the number seven, the highest number in the natural order. Even as we light the seventh light, we observe an empty space on the menorah for an eighth light. It beckons and challenges us to beyond our nature and realize the climax of spiritual light that is symbolized by the number eight. Indeed, the nature of a person who has acquired something positive is to not be content. "Whoever has a hundred zuz, wants two hundred, one who has two hundred wants four hundred."

Two Choices on the Threshold

As we stand on the threshold of the Messianic Age, there are two choices open to us:

We can yearn for better times and ask for the Messianic Age, because exile has been so bitter. Our desire to dispel the darkness that characterized our existence has motivated many a Jew to hope, pray and yearn for Moshiach to come and take us out of exile.

The drawback of this approach is that no sooner do conditions improve, ever so slightly, then Jews are so grateful and appreciative, that they celebrate the victory as small as it may seem. With the passage of time their desire and requests for Moshiach lose their urgency. It takes, G-d forbid, another tragedy to once again inspire them to plead for Moshiach and Redemption.

The second approach – the one associated with the School of Hillel – is one that compels us to focus on the light and celebrate the miracles that G-d has wrought for us in our own day and age. We should not *just* look at the collapse of the Soviet Empire – for example – because it liberated millions of Jews from their oppression, but moreover, we should "open our eyes" and see the manifestation of the Divine in this event. This should whet our appetite for more G-dly light to enter this world.

By concentrating on the positive, we feel a yearning for more. And even as we light the first light on the first night of Chanukah, we already know that our journey of light will not end until we reach the number eight, the number

that transcends the order of nature – the light of Moshiach.

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ESSAY FOUR

CHANUKAH AND TRADITION

Chanukah is an obsession with optimism, excellence, hope and certainty.

An attitude like this can only exist for those who Judaism is a part of life.

When it comes to life, we don't want compromised life.

We want and we seek to live our lives to the fullest.

ESSAY FOUR

CHANUKAH AND TRADITION

Are we Just Obsessed with the Past?

Judaism is a rich tradition, and Chanukah, with its Menorah lighting, latkes eating and dreidel playing is certainly no exception to Judaism's glorious obsession with nostalgic reminders of the past. Is this not so?

In fact, none of the above reflects the truth about Judaism and certainly not about Chanukah.

Judaism is not just a rich tradition, if tradition is to be defined as the perpetuation of ancient rituals or celebrations. As beautiful as this concept of tradition sounds, it obscures the vital, vibrant and relevant nature of Judaism.

What did our sages mean when they said that the words of Torah must be new, just as the day when they were given? They surely meant to underscore the need to view Torah as belonging to the present, not the past.

The blessings we recite over the Torah daily reflect this truth. We do not say "Blessed are You, G-d, who **has given** us the Torah," but rather, "Blessed are you, G-d, who **gives us t**he Torah;" who gives us the Torah this very day, this very minute.

Chanukah Celebrates the Power to Defeat Darkness Today

Chanukah for us is not simply the day, when the brave Maccabees of the past defeated the Syrian Greek forces. Chanukah is the day when we are given the Divine energies to defeat the forces of alienation and indifference today.

The Menorah lighting is not a mere reminder of an ancient temple ritual; it does generate spiritual light here and now, to transform the world from its state of darkness into a state of light.

Chanukah is not only a commemoration of the dedication of the temple 2400 years ago. Chanukah is the dedication of the temple within us this year.

What's Wrong with Tradition?

But, you may ask, what is wrong with tradition? And what, we might add, is so right with viewing Chanukah as an ongoing saga?

The difference lies in the whole conception of Judaism. A religion that is obsessed with the past has essentially conceded defeat to the forces of convention and mediocrity. Students of history are wont to be pessimistic about the future. To the person who is focused on the past, the world can never, and will never change. "History is condemned to repeat itself," is the cliché so many of us live with.

The traditional Jew, who celebrates only the defeat of the Syrian Greeks, is but one rung above the pessimistic historian. His is one of hope that, notwithstanding the perennial struggle with modern day Syrian Greeks for our very survival as Jews, with G-d's help we will make it. From one battle to the next, Jewish life is an incessant struggle to regain our footing so that we can be pushed down once more. But, not to worry, G-d will get us out of this rut also. But, the difference is one of degree and nuance, not of substance.

Both the secular historian and the Jew of faith, who live with the past, acknowledge the futility of real change. Both have resigned themselves to an uncertain future. Both do not see the ultimate radical changes that G-d promised us would happen.

Chanukah: Antithesis of Convention

Chanukah, if anything, represents the antitheses of convention.

The Jews of that time, commentators inform us, were permitted to use any olive oil. Yet they insisted that they would only use untouched, undefiled oil, not because defiled oil was not kosher, but because they were intent on excellence, on doing things unconventionally.

Chanukah is thus a time when we say to G-d,

> "We know that You will accept us even if we are not perfect. We know that circumstances are such that we can get away with mediocre Judaism, but is that really what we are all about? Could G-d not make it so that we don't have to get away with less? We, for our part, will not allow ourselves to be satisfied with mediocrity; we will do things with excellence and beauty, on the highest standard, oblivious even to Torah sanctioned compromises."

And G-d did reciprocate in kind. He performed the great miracle we all know of, in which the pure, undefiled oil lasted for eight days instead of seven.

And it is interesting that our commentators have raised the question as to why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days. They did have a one day supply. There was nothing miraculous about the first day.

The answer to this question in light of the above is that there is a radical difference between one who has one cruse of pure oil and thinks that for the future he will make due with something that is substandard. Then, even the solitary unadulterated cruse of oil has become tainted with the despair and resignation inherent in such an approach. Then it is truly not a pure cruse of oil. Our ancestors, however, realized when they lit the menorah with the lone jug of pure oil that they would not compromise. And the one day supply of oil they viewed not as only one day and no more, but the beginning of a glorious chapter for the future of the Jewish people, which indeed it was.

Obsession with Optimism

This is Chanukah: An obsession with optimism, with excellence, with hope and certainty.

An attitude like this can only exist for those who Judaism is a part of life. When it comes to life, we don't want compromised life, we want and we seek to live our lives to the fullest.

The light of Chanukah, in fact, serves more to presage the future than it is a remembrance of the past, or even living the present to its fullest. Our mystical sages tell us that the light of Chanukah represents the "Hidden Light" which will

be fully revealed in the Age of Redemption; light that will enable us to "see from one end of the world to the other," i.e., light that will remove all barriers and constraints.

The hope that we all express for the coming of Moshiach and for the Age of redemption is our way of expressing what the Hasmoneans of the past felt. We don't want mediocrity any more than we want oppression. We are not satisfied with finding solace in the knowledge that things were worse in the past; that relatively speaking, life is quite good now.

The belief and anticipation for Moshiach, as the genuine nature of Chanukah, is a powerful repudiation of the "theory of relativity" as it relates to real life. We want essential goodness. We want unadulterated purity. We want uncompromised Jewish life and happiness. We want peace and fulfillment for all of humankind. And we exult now, especially during Chanukah, in the knowledge that G-d will make good on His assurances to make this world the ideal world He had envisioned.

This year, as we light the Chanukah lights, we look forward to a time when there will be no restraints on our Jewishness. And as we anxiously await the Redemption, when G-d will remove all of the barriers to completeness, it is our task to remove all self-imposed constraints, while asking of G-d - as we do countless times in our daily

prayers - with sincerity - to usher in an age that will be characterized by the purity of its light and the integrity of its life.

ESSAY FIVE

CHANUKAH IN EGYPT?

We must constantly be thinking of the goal, of preparing ourselves for the future Redemption.

Particularly now as we get closer to that time everything we do must be permeated with the sense that now is the precisely the time for the preparation of Shabbos.

On the other hand, we must not let our yearning for the future impede our ability to do our job while we are still here in the last moments of exile. Every day must be filled with the study of Torah and fulfillment of the Mitzvos.

ESSAY FIVE

CHANUKAH IN EGYPT?

Connection to Parsha Miketz

Chanukah always coincides with the Torah reading of the Parsha Miketz. Our Sages stressed that there is always a connection between a weekly parsha and the Holidays that occur during or close to that reading.

What then is the connection between Mikets that deals with Joseph and his brothers in Egypt and the festival of Lights.

It is interesting, as many commentators have pointed out, that the words which contain Joseph's order to his supervisors to "slaughter an animal and prepare" contain the letters that, when rearranged, spell "Chanukah!"

What connection is there between the preparations for the Shabbos feast and Chanukah?

A connection can be found in light of an analysis of the two approaches of Shammai and Hillel and what can be understood as a parallel dispute between Shammai's and Hillel's students.

Concerning the Chanukah lights there is a dispute between the School of Shammai and School of Hillel. The School of Shammai maintains that we should light eight lights the first night, seven the second night, and so on, in declining order. The School of Hillel maintains that we start with one light the first night and continue in ascending order.

One can find a parallel between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel in a dispute between the two Sages, Shammai and Hillel, themselves.

Preparing for the Shabbos: Two Schools of Thought

The Talmud records a dispute between the Sages Shammai and Hillel with regard to the preparations for the Shabbos. Shammai would purchase food on Sunday and select the finest for Shabbos. On Monday he would find something of higher quality and designate that for Shabbos and eat what he had prepared on Sunday. He would repeat this every day, so that whatever he ate during the week was, in effect, a result of his preparation for the Shabbos. In the words of the Talmud, "All his life he ate for the honor of Shabbos."

Hillel, by contrast, would do everything for the sake of Heaven. He would say, "Blessed is G-d day by day." He would trust that he would find the best food right before Shabbos."

How to Prepare for the Future?

The two Sages' approach to Shabbos reflects two ways of understanding our role in preparing for both the weekly Shabbos and the ultimate Shabbos, the Era of Redemption.

Shammai's approach is to focus on the goal all the time. Whatever we do any day of the week has to be connected to Shabbos. Shammai is obsessed with the spiritually intoxicating day of Shabbos that is a taste of the future. Hillel, by contrast, lives one day at a time. While Hillel also thought of the Shabbos every day of the week his focus was on living each day to the fullest. When people are so preoccupied with preparing for a future event they can forget about the daily obligations they have as Jews. And it is precisely when we make the most of each day of the week that we are best prepared for the ultimate Shabbos.

Both approaches are correct.

On the one hand, we must constantly be thinking of the goal, of preparing ourselves for the future Redemption. Particularly now as we get closer to that time everything

we do must be permeated with the sense that now is the precisely the time for the preparation of Shabbos.

On the other hand, we must not let our yearning for the future impede our ability to do our job while we are still here in the last moments of exile. Every day must be filled with the study of Torah and fulfillment of the Mitzvos.

While we are here in exile our mission is to make wherever we are an extension of the Holy Land of Israel and every moment a Shabbos moment. This we do even as we prepare for the imminent arrival of Moshiach who will transport us into a new era, a Shabbos Era, and bring us back to the Land of Israel in both the literal and spiritual sense.

Shammai Emphasis on First Day of Chanukah

It maybe suggested that the School of Shammai, following the teaching of their mentor Shammai, were obsessed with Shabbos preparations. The School of Shammai therefore put their emphasis on the first day of Chanukah. On the first day of Chanukah they saw into the future that there would be an eight day miracle; so they were obsessed with those eight days. On the second night they saw seven days of miracles so they "lived" with those seven days, and so on.

The School of Hillel, as did their mentor Hillel, directed their energies to living each day to its fullest, knowing that such an outlook will ultimately lead to the future. The School of Hillel therefore required the lighting of one light the first night. On the first day there was one miracle, and it was that miracle that had to be celebrated and internalized.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the future Redemption we have to incorporate both approaches.

To be sure, we must follow the Halacha and light in accordance with the School of Hillel until the time of Redemption when, according to the teachings of the Ari, we will follow the School of Shammai. But, nonetheless, emotionally and spiritually we must integrate these two approaches.

On the one hand, we must yearn for the future when G-d's light, the infinite G-dly light created on the first day of creation that enables us to see from one end of the world to the other, will be revealed. This primordial light is recaptured with the Chanukah lights that we light at present, but which will be fully revealed in the future at which time we will have all eight lights burning brightly, the number eight representing the most transcendent light. Our prayers have to be directed to G-d to make this time

become a reality. All of our thoughts have to revolve around Moshiach and Redemption.

We must also, simultaneously, follow the approach of Hillel and the School of Hillel and focus our attention of living every day that we are still in exile to the fullest, utilizing every opportunity to make our lives today as radiant as they can be. Even if it means just lighting one humble candle, it can be the one candle that will banish the darkness of exile entirely and permanently. We cannot allow our obsession with the future deter us from action today. In this period of transition we have to combine the two opposite mindsets of obsession with the future even as we are totally involved in the present.

ESSAY SIX

CHANUKAH AND THROWING JOSEPH INTO THE PIT

Lighting the Menorah represents the introduction of truly sublime levels of spiritual light into our Earthly realm that transcends the normal levels of spirituality. The ultimate goal is to make the transcendence "visible" and accessible to the lower levels, so that everyone is illuminated and basks in its light.

ESSAY SIX

CHANUKAH AND THROWING JOSEPH INTO THE PIT

Placing the Menorah too High

The Talmud in discussing the laws of the lighting of the Chanukah Menorah quotes a Rabbi Kahana who cited Rabbi Noson bar Menyumi's exposition in the name of Rabbi Tanchum:

> One who places a Chanukah light above 20 cubits is invalid just like a Sukkah [which is covered by branches. These branches must be lower than 20 cubits] and an alley [in the laws of the Shabbos one cannot carry within a semi public domain such as an alley without placing a beam over the entrance to serve as a fourth wall and enclosure. This beam cannot be placed higher than 20 cubits..

Immediately after this discussion of the laws of Chanukah the Talmud continues by citing the same rabbis:

> Rabbi Kahana who cited Rabbi Noson bar Menyumi's exposition in the name of Rabbi Tanchum: What is the meaning of the verse, "and the pit was empty; it had no water in it." From the words wit was empty' we can infer that it had no water, so why does the Torah have to state that it had no water. It is to tell us that it had no waster, but it was infested with snakes and scorpions."

Commentators grapple with the juxtaposition of these two statements. What do they have in common other than they were said by the same trio of rabbis and that the Torah reading concerning Joseph and his brothers always coincides with Chanukah. However, we must understand that there is a thematic connection between these two statements.

Joseph Misjudged

Reuvein, who sought to save Joseph's life, wanted to rehabilitate Joseph thinking that his behavior and attitude were incompatible with Jacob's ideals.

In truth, however, it was a serious misjudgment of Joseph, whose spiritual elevation was above and beyond the level and "view" of his brothers. Joseph was certainly not a rebel

and did not need rehabilitation. Indeed, he was head and shoulders above his brothers and that is why they misunderstood him.

Joseph was "guilty" of one thing. While he rightfully maintained his superiority over his brothers, it was wrong of him not to endeavor to relate to them.

Joseph could have retained his superior spiritual approach and simultaneously found ways of connecting to his brothers despite their inferior status. And, when Joseph finally reached the pinnacle of his spiritual career, which coincided with his rise to power as the Viceroy of Egypt, he did indeed find ways of relating to and finding common ground with them.

The problem with placing the Chanukah Menorah above twenty cubits is that it minimizes its visibility. Lighting the Menorah represents the introduction of truly sublime levels of spiritual light into our Earthly realm that transcends the normal levels of spirituality. The ultimate goal is to make the transcendence "visible" and accessible to the lower levels, so that everyone is illuminated and basks in its light.

Placing the lights of the Chanukah Menorah above twenty cubits parallels Joseph's superior but remote stance that led to his brothers' misjudging him which, in turn, resulted in his bring thrown into the pit with snakes and scorpions.

Moshiach Transcendence Internalized

One of the salient features of the Messianic Age is that the most sublime Divine energies will be fully exposed. In the past, as in the days of the Holy Temples, when that happened it did not always yield positive results. It was comparable to the placement of the lights of the Chanukah menorah beyond the view of most people. The Divine light that shone in the Temple did not always enlighten the people outside. As a consequence, many of the Jews were seduced by Hellenism, which sought to assimilate the Jews into Greek culture. Too much light will blind the common folk, which can be just as injurious as giving them too little light.

In the days of Moshiach, however, that problem will be fully rectified. On the one hand, we will experience so sublime a light that it will transcend the level that was evident in the days of the Beis Hamikdash, a sample of which we experience every Chanukah. On the other hand, precisely because this will be the ultimate transcendent light, it will be eminently accessible to everyone. We will have our proverbial "Chanukah latkes and eat them too."

ESSAY SEVEN

TRANSFORMING THE REBELS

The objective of the lighting of the Chanukah lights goes well beyond dispelling the darkness associated with rebelliousness.

Its true goal is to transform defiance into an extraordinary and unconventional positive force.

ESSAY SEVEN

TRANSFORMING THE REBELS

The Chanukah Connection

Chanukah always occurs right before or during the week in which we read the Torah portion of Vayeishev which discusses the saga of Joseph and his brothers.

Many commentators have drawn parallels from their rivalry and struggle and the struggle of the Jews during the historical period that led up to the miracle of Chanukah.

When the Talmud discusses the appropriate time to kindle the Chanukah lights, it speaks of lighting them when people can still be seen outside in the street. This timing is to ensure that the Menorah brings light to the public and that the miracle of Chanukah will be properly publicized.

The Tarmudites

The Talmud describes the deadline for the lighting in the following manner:

> "Until the feet of the Tarmudites cease from the marketplace."

Rashi explains that the Tarmudites would sell their wares in the marketplace and would tarry there later than the other vendors.

If we were to rearrange the Hebrew letters of Tarmud, it would spell *Moredes*, meaning "rebel." Chassidic literature thus reinterprets this legal requirement of when to light and retranslates the foregoing phrases in a spiritual vein, as follows:

> "One must kindle the light of Chanukah until it causes the legs (read: lowliest aspects of) the rebels to *kalya*-cease from the marketplace."

The word *kalya* that is translated as here as "cease" can also be rendered as "expired."

Chassidus explains that the ultimate goal of lighting is to enable the souls of the rebels to achieve the spiritual state

of ecstatic passion for G-d, where the soul's desire is to expire so that it can be united with G-d.

In simpler language, this implies that the objective of the lighting of the Chanukah lights goes well beyond dispelling the darkness associated with rebelliousness. Its true goal is to transform defiance into an extraordinary and unconventional positive force.

Joseph's Name

What is it about Joseph that was so powerful?

Joseph's very name, which means "may he increase," reveals some of his uniqueness. Joseph is about continuous growth; never standing in one place. A mountain climber cannot dare stay in one place. To prevent oneself from falling, one must continue to grow.

This theme is associated with Chanukah's requirement that we increase the number of lights kindled each night. The term employed by the Talmud for this progressive increase is "*mosaif*," similar to the name Joseph. Chanukah is all about embracing the Joseph ideal.

Chanukah, too, was a war against the forces who attempted to adulterate the purity of the oil and light in the Bais

Hamikdash. The antidote to that poison in our own day is to continually add light and not settle for the light that has already been generated.

But the demands of the Joseph ideal are not satisfied by mere incremental increases. He received the name Joseph because his mother exclaimed: "May G-d increase for me **another** son." When Rachel sees the soul of Joseph at his birth, she realizes that he will do much more than just fight rebelliousness. Joseph, according to the Tzemach Tzedek (the third Lubavitcher Rebbe), represents even more than just continual positive growth. Joseph is about taking the "other" and transforming him into a son.

Living the Joseph ideal is the hallmark of the Messianic Age. Moshiach will not only add to the light and goodness, his role is also to transform the otherness and negativity of the world into potent positive forces.

We don't want to be Excluded

There is another, opposite, approach to understanding the motives of Joseph's brothers. Rabbi Aryeh Fromer (Rosh Yeshivah of the famed Chachmei Lublin Yeshivah in Poland, martyred by the Germans, *yemach shemam*) explains that

they feared Jacob's special relationship with Joseph threatened their own ability to carry on Jacob's legacy.

From past experience it was clear that Abraham, who fathered 8 sons, only entrusted his teachings and spiritual role to Isaac. Isaac, too, would ultimately give his blessings to one son, Jacob, making him the true heir. Eisav was pushed aside and lost his role in the Divine plan that would pave the way for the giving of the Torah. Eisav was thus expelled from the process that would lead inexorably to realization of G-d's purpose in Creation—to make this world a dwelling place for Him.

Joseph's brothers were terrified that Jacob's special relationship with and apparent preference for Joseph was a sign that they, like Eisav, were going to be excluded from this process.

For them, spiritual alienation was worse than death. They therefore devised a scheme to prevent their apparent fate by killing Joseph first.

Judah, however, argued that all they had to do to realize their objective of distancing him from their father was to ensure that Joseph would not remain loyal to his father. They would accomplish this goal by selling their brother into slavery in Egypt, a country was known for its immorality and depravity. Surely, they imagined, Joseph

would not be able to remain a true follower of the legacy of the Patriarchs in the spiritual cesspit that was Egypt.

Once Joseph was out of the picture, physically or spiritually speaking, Jacob would be forced to turn redirect his attention to his other sons.

Joseph and Moshiach: the Channels

Obviously, Joseph's brothers were utterly mistaken. Jacob's affinity for Joseph was not going to be at their expense.

On the contrary, Joseph was to be the conduit through which the lofty ideals of the Patriarchs would be channeled *into the other brothers*. Only Joseph was endowed with an uncanny ability to reach the spiritual heights and draw that spirituality down to the lowliest places.

This idea of reaching for the heights and bringing it down into our ordinary existence is one of the signal characteristics of Moshiach and the Messianic Age. Moshiach embodies the loftiest spiritual ideals, but unlike other righteous people, he serves as the ultimate leader who can relate to even the simplest and most "distant" Jew.

Moreover, Moshiach, like Joseph, possesses the ability to instill the most sublime levels of G-dly light, exemplified by

the Chanukah lights, into the most ordinary and even alienated, rebellious person; thereby transforming the "other" into a most sublime "son."

ESSAY EIGHT

FREE AT LAST AND THE LAST DAY OF CHANUKAH

The aspect of Chanukah as a power of transforming darkness into light comes to fruition specifically on the last and eight day of Chanukah.

Eight, is the number of transcendence.

It represents the infinite power of the G-dly light that shines on Chanukah that never ends and that can even transform the darkness into light.

ESSAY EIGHT

FREE AT LAST AND THE LAST DAY OF CHANUKAH

No Coincidences

This Shabbos, we celebrate the second Shabbos of Chanukah, something that occurs infrequently.

This is also the last day of Chanukah and the Shabbos that features the Torah reading of Miketz that refers to the "end" of the two year period Joseph had to languish in prison before he was freed and subsequently rose to the position of Viceroy of Egypt.

The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that there are no coincidences. Certainly the fact that the "end" of Chanukah is also the day that we focus on the theme of "end" in relation to Joseph's stay in prison is fortuitous.

What, we may ask, is the connection between Chanukah and Joseph? And more specifically, what is the connection between the last day of Chanukah and the Joseph saga.

Three Meanings of Joseph

To better appreciate the connection between Joseph and the Festival of Chanukah it is important to examine the very name Joseph. He was so named because his mother prayed that G-d would give her another son (literally: "May G-d increase for me another son.").

Upon deeper analysis of the original Hebrew text, the word Joseph in Hebrew suggests three points:

The first is the idea of increasing; not staying in one place.

The second idea is that the one's increase must be a procreative one, i.e., one must create a process that has the potential to give birth to something new, ad infinitum.

The third idea conveyed by the Hebrew original (which can be rendered alternatively as: "May G-d add another to me that he may be a son.") is that Joseph represents the capacity to transform "another", i.e., an outsider, into a child, the consummate insider.

The Essence of Chanukah

This, in essence, is what Chanukah is all about. We add on new light every night. We cannot be content with our original level of light.

But the true definition of adding on is that it carries within it the potential for further growth that will never cease. Indeed, the Midrash states that the light of the Menorah will always be around. Nachmanides explains that the Midrash refers to the light of Chanukah.

But, the idea of increase represented by the name Joseph is such that it can even take the people and energies that are "outside" and convert them into "insiders."

Going Beyond Eliminating the Rebels

In the preceding essay we discussed how Chanukah light can eliminate the spirit of rebelliousness that exists in the marketplace. What we are discussing now goes even beyond that. Not only do we eliminate these rebels and their rebelliousness, but, moreover, Chanukah light enables us to take these extremely distant "outside" influences ("marketplace") and transform them into "insiders—the "other" becomes a child.

Eight Synonymous with Transcendence

This aspect of Chanukah comes to fruition specifically on the last and eight day of Chanukah. Eight, is the number of transcendence, and it represents the infinite power of the G-dly light that shines on Chanukah that never ends and that can even transform the darkness into light.

We can now appreciate the connection between the last day of Chanukah with the weekly parsha that is called "*Miketz*-the end." This portion discusses how Joseph was finally free. He was now able to utilize his G-d given spiritual power to increase his light. And as a result, with his prophetic vision and skill at dream interpretation, Joseph converted the impending catastrophe of seven years of famine into life for all of Egypt and other parts of the world, and paved the way for the reunion with his brothers and his father Jacob. And the rest, they say, is history.

The name "Miketz-the end" is also an allusion to the Biblical concept of the "end of days," or the Messianic Era.

At that time, we will see the realization of the Joseph ideal of continual growth and increase of G-dly light to the point that even the negative forces of our world will be converted into good. Of course, there are certain forms and aspects of evil that are not salvageable. They will cease to exist. But all

other aspects of evil will undergo complete transformation in the "end of days."

ESSAY NINE
EIGHT AND NOT SEVEN

The very essence of Chanukah is praise and thanksgiving and not just joy.

Lighting the menorah – as an expression of praise and thanksgiving – is what characterizes the holiday and not just something that we do during Chanukah.

Underlying this approach is the notion that the greatest form of thanksgiving is when it involves the generation of extraordinary light.

ESSAY NINE

EIGHT AND NOT SEVEN

Talmudic Source for Chanukah

The Talmud discusses the history of Chanukah and mentions the miracle with the lone cruse of oil they found. All the other oil was contaminated by the Greeks. However, the Talmud continues there was a problem because they would not be able to procure pure oil for another eight days and this lone cruse of oil was only enough for one day:

In the words of the Talmud:

> **And it did not have more than what was needed to kindle for one day. A miracle then occurred with it and they kindled with it for eight days.**

One of the most famous questions asked is why do we not celebrate Chanukah for only seven days, inasmuch as there was oil for the first day?

Among the answers we find the following:

a) They divided it into eight parts and each part lasted for the entire night.

b) The first day commemorates the victory while the other seven days commemorate the miracle with the cruse of oil.

c) The first day commemorates the miracle of finding the cruse of oil. That cruse, sealed with the seal of the High Priest was obviously hidden very well for the Greeks would have contaminated it had they found it.

d) The Syrian Greeks banned the observance of circumcision which occurs on the eighth day. To commemorate the victory of circumcision they added another day. This was their way to express their gratitude for the reinstatement of circumcision.

e) The Holiday of Chanukah was modeled after the Biblical thanksgiving holiday of Sukkos which is 8 days. Inasmuch as they were engaged in fierce battle during Sukkos they felt a need to make up for it during Chanukah.

In Chassidic literature, based on the Maharal and others, the number seven is associated with nature since the creation of the world occurred within a seven day period.

Chanukah, however, is an eight day Holiday because it represents the transcendent revelation of G-dly light. Whereas other Holidays are connected to the number seven

which is part of the natural order, albeit, a sublime aspect of G-dly light, Chanukah revealed the light of the future Messianic Age, which will transcend all levels of holiness.

The Talmud continues:

> **The next year they established these days and made them into holidays**

Why did they wait for next year to establish as a holiday?

The answer is that a Jewish holiday is not just an arbitrary time to commemorate an event. It is also not simply an auspicious anniversary. Rather, the spiritual energies that were dominant when the miracle occurred recur on the anniversary in future years.

For the sages to know whether Chanukah was a holiday like the others, they had to wait for the next year to "feel" the spiritual "vibrations." When they did sense the holiness of the days on the next year, they then declared it a holiday.

> **...for praise and thanksgiving.**

"Praise" refers to the recitation of *Hallel* and "thanksgiving" refers to the "*Al HaNissim*" prayer recited in our daily prayers and grace after meals.

A question, however, arises. Why doesn't the Talmud, in this discussion of the laws and history of Chanukah, mention that we are to kindle a Menorah, the most important mitzvah of Chanukah? While the Talmud discusses the laws of lighting the Menorah in an earlier discussion, when it presents the history of Chanukah it strangely omits mention of the key observance of lighting a Menorah!

Some suggest that this is included in the word "thanksgiving," that includes both prayer as well as lighting the menorah.

Alternatively, it may be suggested that the Talmud did not have to tell us that we are supposed to light the menorah on Chanukah. That was well known and therefore, the Talmud does not even ask "What is Chanukah?" until after the discussion of all the basic laws of lighting the menorah. The Talmud, in this section, is not concerned with **what we do** on Chanukah, but rather with **how do we characterize** the obligation of Chanukah?

The obligation of lighting Chanukah candles could have been a separate function that we do during Chanukah, but it may not have been an integral part of the Holiday. For example: the mitzvah of Sukkah characterizes Sukkos. In addition, the Torah commanded us to take the "Four Kinds" during the Holiday of Sukkos.

Here too, the Talmud underscores, the very **essence** of Chanukah is praise and thanksgiving and not just joy. Thus, lighting the menorah – as an expression of praise and thanksgiving – is what characterizes the holiday and not just something that we do during Chanukah.

Underlying this approach is the notion that the greatest form of thanksgiving is when it involves the generation of light.

That is why the ultimate era of thanksgiving will be in the Messianic Age, when, as our Sages declare, all private sacrifices will no longer be needed. The only sacrifice that will still be in practice will be the thanksgiving offering/

The Messianic Age thanksgiving will be due to many factors. But chiefly among them is the fact that the Light of Chanukah that we have fir eight days will be fully revealed at all times to the entire world.

Light evokes gratitude. Transcendent light evokes extraordinary expressions of praise and gratitude.

ESSAY TEN

CHANUKAH AND EDUCATION

In Jewish education, there are times when a child (and the child within us) has to know that he or she must search, probe, question and seek answers.

Never be satisfied with what we now understand.

The child must also know that there are certain things that are elusive; they are beyond us and for which we do not know the answer.

ESSAY TEN

CHANUKAH AND EDUCATION

Two Education Holidays

There are two Holidays that relate to *chinuch*/education of children: The Biblical Holiday of Pesach and the rabbinic Holiday of Chanukah

One of the characteristics of chinuch is the interaction between the educator and those whom he or she is educating. That interaction is punctuated by the questions that the student asks, and the way the teacher responds to those questions.

The Power of Questions

Pesach and Chanukah are both Holidays of chinuch and they are therefore both involve questions.

We all know that the Seder features the four question asked by the child. In addition, we are told that certain

customs—such as dipping the parsley in salt-water—were designed to get the child to ask questions.

Chanukah is also a Holiday, about which hundreds of questions have been asked in Torah literature, ranging from Halacha (Jewish law) to Kabbalah. There are certain questions that have been asked repeatedly and for which hundreds of answers have been provided.

So the common denominator of these two Holidays is that they both involve questions.

Difference between Pesach Questions and Chanukah Questions

Where they differ, however, is that Pesach focuses on the questions; Chanukah dwells on the answers as well.

During Pesach the child is encouraged to ask questions, but the answers are not always forthcoming. For example, the reason we dip the parsley in salt-water is to get the child to ask questions, despite the fact that there is no real answer to the question. Likewise, not all of the four questions are answered explicitly in the Haggadah. While the Haggadah mentions the reason for Matzah and Maror, it says nothing about the dipping and the reclining. Even the explanations of Matzah and Maror are not given forthwith, but the child has to wait

until the end of a long recitation of the Passover story before he gets his answer.

It seems that the emphasis of Pesach is to ask questions and to know that some of these questions will be answered eventually.

Indeed, there is a Chabad Chassidic tradition that the discourses said by several generations of Chabad Rebbes started with questions, but provide no definitive answers.

Chanukah, by contrast is dedicated to the answers, contrasted with Pesach which is time for asking questions

Two Approaches to Chinuch

Both are related to chinuch but they reflect two approaches to chinuch; one is to ask questions, the other to answer them. Why?

During Pesach the answer is elusive; because the Geulah-Redemption of Pesach was incomplete.

Chanukah is the hidden light of Moshiach. Here the questions are answered, because Chanukah is about discovery, whereas Pesach is about the search. Indeed, we search for Chometz the night before Passover, even

if we know that no Chometz exists. It is not considered a blessing in vain to search and not find; it is a blessing in vain if we don't search properly.

In Jewish education, there are times when a child (and the child within us) has to know that they must search, probe, question and seek answers. Never be satisfied with what we now understand. The child must also know that there are certain things that are elusive; they are beyond us and for which we do not know the answer.

Primary Question Remains Unanswered

The primary question that Passover does not answer is why are we still in exile? Why is there suffering and pain in the world? Pesach, the Festival of Freedom, beckons us to ask why, and not accept any answer until we have Moshiach and the complete Redemption.

Sometimes having the answer makes us complacent. If I can understand why there is suffering in the world, will I be motivated to do something to alleviate the suffering?

G-d deliberately makes it difficult, if not impossible, to fathom certain things, so that we continually struggle to

find the answer, and in so doing pave the way for the final Redemption.

Chanukah, by contrast is when the hidden light of Moshiach was first revealed to the world. Chanukah is thus about the answers.

In terms of chinuch, it is important that the student knows that there are answers and be given a sample of that glorious period in the future when all of our questions will be resolved.

Proper chinuch requires that the student knows that the search for truth is no less important an ideal than the discovery of it. As long as we are on this journey from Egypt to the final Redemption, what propels us to the next level is the search for the elusive answer.

Moshiach is called a *metziah*, something that is elusive and when it is found it comes as a total surprise; yet we are obligated to search for Moshiach and Redemption, as it says (Hosea 3:4-5):

> For the children of Israel shall sit solitary many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim; afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and **seek the L-rd their G-d, and David their**

King; and shall come trembling unto the L-rd and to His goodness in the end of days."

This verse, incorporated into the monthly prayer for the new moon, we fulfill every time we see the diminished moon symbolic of our diminished fortunes in exile. At that time we motivate ourselves to search for the Redemption, for the moon to wax until it becomes a full moon.

Simultaneously, proper chinuch requires that the student be imbued with the knowledge that there are answers and that the goal is and will be reachable. For this reason, Chanukah is about asking questions, but also about finding the answers, just as the Maccabees found the lone cruse of undefiled oil, the symbol of the Messianic anointment and light.

Connection to Weekly Parsha

That Chanukah is about discovery and not just about search, is perhaps alluded to in the weekly parsha we read before or during Chanukah: "Vayeishev Yaakov-And Jacob settled." The very name Jacob connotes an impediment, a question; like a log that stands in the way and blocks our passage. And the word—which is the actual name of the Torah portion—"Vayeishev-And

he settled", connotes the idea of the settling of an issue that was unsettling—answering a question.

Indeed, the very name Chanukah incorporates the idea of clarifying those things that are unclear—answering questions. The word Chanukah, commentators say, is a composite of two words: *chanu chaf-hei*, they encamped (and had a respite from battle) on the 25th (of the month of Kislev).

When we are plagued with questions and doubts, it is like a war situation. Chanukah represents the end of the struggle with the forces of evil and darkness, and it is also the time that we celebrate the emergence from the intellectual darkness that is generated by the questions that cloud our understanding of the Torah.

This and Thus

We can take this "hint" a step further. The second part of the composite word Chanu-kah is the Hebrew word "*chof-hei*" which, can read *koh*, that translates as "thus." The difference between "this-*zeh*" and "thus-*koh*" is that the former means that we are referring to something that we can see clearly, whereas "thus" implies that it is virtually this way, but not quite.

The difference between "this" and "thus" is discussed in the context of the distinction between Moses' prophecy and all the other prophets. Whereas Moses could say "*zeh*" this is precisely what G-d had said to me—there was no trance or dream when G-d communicated with him—other prophets could only say "*Koh*", Thus says the L-rd," suggesting that they had a hazy image of the message.

Chassidic thought speaks of the difference between chof-hei Elul, the day the world was created, and the first of Tishrei, Rosh Hashanah, the day that Adam was created in the context of the difference between "this" and "thus."

Concerning Rosh Hashanah we say in our liturgy: "Zeh-This is the day, the beginning of Your handiwork." The word "this" is employed, because previously the world did not possess the ability to rise above the virtual or concealed reality. Only with the advent of the creation of Adam, was the power to introduce true reality into the world a manifest possibility.

Returning now to Chanukah, the composite of chanu-chof hei, it may be suggested that Chanu-chof-hei that the state of koh, of virtual reality has been settled.

In a state of virtual reality, we cannot see clearly and we are inundated with questions. We cannot see truth and

how G-d's message to us is valid. We cannot see and understand why things are happening the way they are. We can only see a small slice of the picture of life, and we are left confused by what is happening. And this state of concealment raises questions in our minds and present formidable obstacles to our spiritual growth. In short, the idea of chof-hei is that we live in a virtual reality; we don't see the true reality.

Chanukah is when we remove the cover; the concealment; the virtual nature of existence: *Chanu-chof hei.*

As stated earlier, Chanukah is the revelation of the "*or haganuz*," the light that was created on the first day of creation, but hidden and preserved for the Messianic Age. It is the light of Moshiach, which enables us to see from one end of the world to the other; enables us to remove the concealment of the world, which in Hebrew is *olam*, etymologically related to the word "concealment." This light enables us to see things in depth and in the context of all space, time and spiritual energy.

The entire phenomenon of exile/Galus is one big question,

Four Torah Portions and Chanukah

This week's parsha begins with Jacob wanting to settle, and G-d causes the rivalry to unsettle him. Jacob tried to get rid of the question of exile, but needed Joseph, the dream interpreter to find the answer to the dreamlike virtual reality of exile. But even Joseph could not finalize the answer until *Vayigash Yehudah*, when Judah and Joseph have their rapprochement.

Thus, Vayeishev is Jacob's attempt at "retirement" after finding the "*pach hashemen*-the cruse of oil" and vanquishing the angel, who renamed him Israel. Jacob, now named Israel, thought that he had earned his retirement from the struggle. But, the time was not yet ready. He did not yet accumulate all the necessary energies for that to occur.

But in the next parsha associated with Chanukah—parshas Miketz—Joseph—whose very name which means "increase" is associated with the increased measure of light every night—the next major step in preparing the world with the energy to get out of the dream state of exile occurs.

But only in Vayigash, the third parsha associated with Chanukah—it always occurs immediately after Chanukah—when Joseph and Judah come together, only then do we find the word *goshnah*; the letters which

appear on the Dreidel and which have the gematria, numerical value of Moshiach.

In other words, there are four stages in the unfolding of the Chanukah drama: First: the light has to be discovered that enables us to dispel the darkness of exile. This light has been revealed to the world with the revelation of Chassidus. This is what happens in parshas Vayishlach, where Jacob retrieves the cruse of oil-the *pach hashemen*.

Five Stages in Redemption

This first stage may be said to correspond to the revelation of the Ba'al Shem Tov, who introduced the light of Chassidus.

The second stage is taking that transcendent light and bringing it into the parameters of our world. This is alluded to in parshas Vayeishev, which implies the internalization of the concepts.

It may be suggested that Parshas Vayeishev alludes to the teachings of Chabad—introduced by the Alter Rebbe and expanded on by subsequent leaders of Chabad, especially the Rebbe Rashab, the Rambam of Chassidus—who brought Chassidus into the world.

But even this was not enough; there was still an attempt at the "other side" to extinguish the light of Moshiach, which is what the last word of Parshas Vayeishev alludes to. It is "*vayishkacheihu*-and he forgot him." This refers to the butler who completely forgetting about Joseph and his kindness to him; one of the symptoms of Galus.

Therefore we need parshas Milketz, with the emphasis on Yosef, increasing the light despite the obstacles.

Parshas Miketz can be said to allude to the Previous Rebbe—Yosef—whose contribution helped to transform the dream into Geulah.

But, even that was not enough. Chanukah with all of its light is a not complete until we have parshas Vayigash, where the union of the dynamic forces of light (Yosef) is connected to Moshiach (Yehudah).

Parshas Vayigash, can therefore be said to correspond to our Rebbe, who brings an end to the golus, followed by Vayechi,-and he lived which alludes to the eternal life we will experience in the Messianic Era.

Chanukah is thus the time when we have a right to expect the answer to our question: "Ad Masai-How much longer?!"

ESSAY ELEVEN

CHANUKAH DELETED!

Chanukah is the defeat of those who wanted us to forget.

Forgetfulness is a product of alienation from our G-dly soul.

Tanya explains that the reason we forget is because our Animal Soul governs us. Because it is a natural soul, it follows the laws of nature for things to continually deteriorate and decompose. One of those natural effects is the decline in our memories.

Chanukah ignites our G-dly Soul and eliminates forgetfulness.

ESSAY ELEVEN

CHANUKAH DELETED!

Why is Chanukah not Mentioned in the Mishnah

Chanukah is one of the most discussed Holidays in Talmudic literature. Hundreds of questions have ben raised about this rabbinic Holiday.

One of the questions asked concerning Chanukah is:

Why are the laws of Chanukah not mentioned in the Mishnah?

Every Holiday is given extensive treatment in the Mishnah including Purim, although it is considered to be a rabbinical Holiday. Yet the Mishnah omits mention of the laws concerning Chanukah such as the lighting of the Menorah, etc.

While the Talmud expounds on the laws of Chanukah they are conspicuously absent from the Mishnah.

The simplest answer given by the Rebbe is that the basic requirements of Chanukah were already mentioned in an earlier text, called Megilas Ta'anis.

Punishment of the Hasmoneans!?

There is another well-known answer ascribed to the 19th century Sage, known as the Chasam Sofer, which is problematic.

The Hasmoneans, the heroes of Chanukah, were all righteous me who sacrificed their life on behalf of Judaism. However, after they wrested power from the Syrian Greeks, they failed to hand over the leadership to a descendant of King David in accordance with the Biblical command that royalty should be given to the Davidic dynasty.

According to Nachmanides, their failure to do this was so egregious, that the Hasmonean dynasty came to a violent end. Herod murdered all the descendants; they were completely obliterated.

The editor of the Mishnah, Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi was a scion of King David and he zealously protected the integrity of the Davidic dynasty. He was so upset at the failure of the Hasmoneans that he "penalized" them by

omitting the laws of Chanukah in his redaction of the Mishnah.

This explanation is problematic. There are many questions that have been raised and many have doubted it was truly the explanation authored by the famed Chasam Sofer.

The most significant difficulty with this explanation is that it would have been unconscionable for the great and holy Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi to punish a Holiday because of the failure of its original heroes.

While individuals could be punished even if they are righteous because G-d holds them to a higher standard, we cannot punish a part of Judaism on account of a lapse in the heroes who were instrumental in the institution of Chanukah.

The Writing of the Oral Law: A Galus Phenomenon

Perhaps the actual explanation of the Chasam Sofer was actually totally different from the one ascribed to him, which actually places Chanukah on a pedestal rather than relegating it to a lower status.

To understand his explanation it is necessary to first discuss the objective of the Mishnah.

The reason the Mishnah was written, although there was an admonition not to submit the Oral Torah to writing, was a result of the trying conditions of Galus-exile. The Sages were concerned that the dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans and the ensuing exile would prevent the transmission of the many detail of the Oral Torah.

Galus necessitated submitting the basic outline of the Oral Torah to writing so that it is not forgotten.

Memory Loss

Forgetfulness is a product of alienation from our G-dly soul. Tanya explains that the reason we forget is because our Animal Soul governs us. Because it is a natural soul, it follows the laws of nature for things to continually deteriorate and decompose. One of those natural effects is the decline in our memories.

It stands to reason that the Tanya's explanation of memory loss applies specifically and primarily to matters of Torah. Since the Animal Soul, in its unrefined state, is by its very nature, indifferent or hostile to holy matters' the stronger and more dominant the Animal Soul becomes, the more it will affect the memory of spiritual matters.

Thus, the person who is governed by his or her G-dly soul, and for whom the Animal drives are under control, will experience far less memory loss. And this is especially true for matters of Torah.

However, Galus – a time of Divine concealment and alienation, not just geographic dispersion – suppresses the G-dly soul's influence and enables the strengthening of the Animal Soul.

Thus Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi realized that one of the causalities of Galus will be forgetting the Divine teachings of the Oral Law. He therefore felt compelled to subject these laws to writing.

Chanukah would have Obviated need for Writing

Let us now return to the effects of Chanukah and the error of the Hasmoneans:

Chanukah was the introduction of the most powerful and transcendent Divine light. Not only were the Jews in the Land of Israel, they also had the Bais Hamikdash in their hands and removed the pagan influence of the Syrian Greeks and the assimilationist influence of the Hellenists. The Jewish people had now reached the zenith of their status that negates the possibility of Galus. This situation was in effect identical to the Messianic Age.

What then was missing and why did the situation deteriorate until the Romans took over and the Temple destroyed and the Jews driven into exile? How did such glory become so reversed?

The one thing that was missing was the installment of a King from the house of David, who would have been the Moshiach and would have unleashed a permanent state of G-dly presence and peace.

Maimonides makes it abundantly clear that the belief in a Messianic Age without Moshiach being the one to lead it is a denial of the Torah and a repudiation of the 12the Principle of Faith.

Hence, the failure of the Hasmonean heroes to install a King from the House of David allowed for their victories over Galus conditions to dissipate. The Hasmonean descendants were themselves becoming part of the assimilation process. They subsequently invited Roman influence into their midst, taken over by the evil Herod, which ultimately led to total Roman domination. This, of course, led to the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile, which necessitated committing the Oral Law to a written form.

From the above analysis of the Hasmonean failure, of not giving leadership to a scion of Davidic dynasty, we can see how their inaction had sown the seeds of the ultimate

degeneration of the Chanukah miracle. This, in turn, led to the Galus, which ultimately necessitated the written form of the Mishnah.

It is no coincidence that the letters of the word Mishnah, when rearranged, form the word Menasheh, the elder son of Joseph, who was so named because Joseph said, "G-d has made me forget my father's house and all my travail." In other words, the name Menashe, which can be formed out of the letters of Mishnah, implies forgetfulness. This ties in with what has been discussed here that the Mishnah's writing was caused by the forgetfulness phenomenon associated with Galus.

It should be noted that because Mishneh is antidote to forgetfulness, we learn Mishnah for the soul of a deceased person. The simple reason for this is that the letters of the word Mishnah also forms the word neshama-soul. It is our way of connecting to and elevating the soul of the deceased.

However, another reason is given that Mishnah is the antidote for forgetfulness. As we discussed the cause of forgetfulness is alienation from our G-dly soul. When a person passes on the distance between him or her is now an unbridgeable gulf form the vantage point of our bodies and Animal Souls.

This separation will naturally cause us to forget, so we need the Mishnah which touches our G-dly soul and thereby prevents us from forgetting.

This may be one meaning of the Talmudic statement: "On should not take leave of his fellow except through words of Halacha-Jewish law, for through this he will remember him." The ultimate taking leave is when a person's soul leaves his body and he is separated from all those that are alive. To prevent that separation from forgetting the deceased we study Mishnah which is a compilation of Jewish law.

That Chanukah is connected to remembering, is hinted in the word Mishnah ion yet another way. There is one more way of rearranging the letters of Mishnah (besides Menashe and Neshama): *Hashemen*-the oil. This alludes to the miracle with the lone cruse of oil. Moreover, the Talmud states that olive oil is an antidote to forgetfulness.

Returning to the Hasmoneans

Had they not erred by failing to appoint a king from the House of David there would have been no need for the writing of the Mishnah because there would have been no Galus.

The original victory of the Hasmoneans over the Greeks was a reversal of Galus and forgetfulness. The Syrian

Greeks attempted to get us to forget G-d's Torah, as we say ion the Chanukah *Al HaNissim* prayer.

If the Chanukah spirit would have endured, there would not be any need for the writing of the Mishnah. Hence, Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi left Chanukah out of the Mishnah as a way of exemplifying the uniqueness of Chanukah; it transcends the written word.

It is also no coincidence that the word Chashmonah (the singular form of Hasmoneans) contains within it the word Mishnah. Their initial actions to liberate the Temple would have been a substitute for the Mishnah. In the end, their inaction guaranteed the ultimate need for the Mishnah.

It is also no coincidence that the word Chashmonaim has the same numerical value as Moshiach Now in Hebrew letters!

Chasam Sofer's Explanation Revisited

This perhaps is what the Chasam Sofer meant when he said that Rabbi Yeudah Hanassi "deleted" Chanukah from his compilation of the Mishnah.

His explanation was likely not intended to "punish" or demean the status of Chanukah. On the contrary, by leaving it out of the Mishnah, his intention was to extoll the greatness of Chanukah. The omission suggests that

Chanukah transcends the need for a **written** Mishnah because the light of Chanukah transcends Galus, the very cause for the written Mishnah.

It is also true, that in saying this, it also provided an oblique criticism of the Hasmoneans for having depreciated the very greatness of Chanukah. It is they who reversed the Chanukah dynamic which they themselves were instrumental in bringing about with their heroism and self-sacrifice.

Focus of Chanukah

When we celebrate Chanukah we must realize that its main message that we have to connect to the light that takes us out of Galus with particular emphasis on connecting to Moshiach as the one who ushers in the Final Redemption.

The message of Chanukah is that it does not suffice for us to have vanquished our enemies and live in the Land of Israel. It does not even suffice that we have purified and restored the Bais Hamikdash to its original glory. All of this is great when it is connected to a descendant of the House of David, the Moshiach who ushers in the Redemption.

ESSAY TWELVE

GREEK DARKNESS AND CHANUKAH LIGHT

The Rebbe explains why the Greeks did not destroy the oil but only contaminated it with the Greek "touch."

Their objective was to remove the sanctity from the Temple and all of Judaism.

ESSAY TWELVE

GREEK DARKNESS AND CHANUKAH LIGHT

Why were the Greeks Singled Out?

The Midrash comments on one of the opening words of the Torah: "darkness was on the face of the deep." The Midrash states that the darkness alludes to the Greek Empire because it darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees, for they would say to them, "Write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the G-d of Israel."

The question can be asked, why of all the nations that persecuted the Jews were the ancient Greeks singled out to be described as darkness?

Moreover, of all nations, the Greeks were responsible for the greatest explosion of knowledge. They excelled in virtually all areas of knowledge; mathematics, astronomy and especially philosophy. They were great in art and science. The Talmud praises ancient Greek and Maimonides extolled the intellect of Aristotle.

The simple answer is that the Greeks denied the Divinity of Torah. They tried to extinguish the light of Torah and just leave its shell which is dark relative to its true nature.

Translation of Tora into Greek

It all began with the Greek translation of the Torah. The Talmud relates that King Ptolemy of Egypt invited 72 Sages and asked them to translate the Torah into Greek. To insure that they were not going to alter its meaning he placed them into 72 cubicles.

Miraculously, all of the 72 Sages translated the Torah identically. Moreover, they did make 13 identical changes that would prevent the King form misinterpreting the words of the Torah or take what it says as a personal insult.

The first change was the syntax of the very first words of Genesis. In the original, the Torah says, "Bereishis-In the beginning G-d created..." The first word begins with the letter Beis. However, in their translation they inverted the word "beginning" and instead translated it as "G-d created in the beginning." The name for G-d here begins with the letter aleph.

This is not just a minor difference. The reason the Torah begins with a beis and not an aleph is explained by the

Rebbe, based on the Talmud and Midrash, because it is the number two, which suggests that study of Torah is the second step we take towards the Torah. The first step is the awareness and affirmation that it is G-d's wisdom which totally transcends human wisdom.

However, the Torah that was translated into Greek was missing that crucial element. The Greeks were not capable of accepting the transcendent aspect of Torah so the Sages, with Divine inspiration, saw to it that their Torah started with an aleph. For them, the intellectual knowledge of Torah was the maximum they could reach.

Once the Torah was "watered down" to accommodate the Greek monarch, the seeds of the degeneration of the standard of Torah for the Jews under Greek domination took place.

13 changes, 13 Breaches

The thirteen changes that were necessitated were the seeds of subsequent Greek tyranny over Jews and Judaism. This tyranny included the 13 breaches of the wall of the Bais Hamikdash, known as the soreg. This wall was the boundary that separated the non-Jews who came to the Temple from the Jewish pilgrims. Breaching of this partition was the Greek way of saying we are going to

infringe on your concept of holiness and separation and adulterate the concept of holiness.

This too, the Rebbe explains is why the Greeks did not destroy the oil but only contaminated it with the Greek "touch." Their objective was to remove the sanctity from the Temple and all of Judaism. This all began tragically by the changes made in their translation, which hid the Divine transcendent aspect of Torah.

This explains why the Talmud states that the day in which this translation was made was as difficult for the Jews as the day in which the Golden Calf was made.

We can now understand why the Greek Empire and Greek culture is characterized by the Midrash as darkness. The light of Torah derives from the recognition of its Divine transcendent nature.

Torah versus Secular Knowledge

However, there is a deeper way of understanding the association between Greek knowledge and darkness that is reflected in the difference between Torah knowledge an secular knowledge.

The Talmud states that if one were to say to us that there is wisdom amongst the nations we should believe them. The Torah recognizes the value of many of the secular

disciplines. Moreover, some of these disciplines such as mathematics and astronomy are crucial for the laws of the sanctification of the new moon. Some of the greatest rabbis were astronomers,; a requirement for the members of the Sanhedrin.

The knowledge of medicine is another example where secular knowledge is indispensable for healing people, which, according to Maimonides is a Biblical commandment that does not allow us to stand idly by the blood of our fellow and the requirement to return a lost object which includes restoring one's health.

However, secular knowledge as an independent entity, that does not serve a higher purpose, is a qualitatively inferior area of knowledge. This is reflected in the end of the foregoing Talmudic citation that recognized the wisdom of the Nations: "If one were to tell you that is Torah amongst the nations do not believe him." This means that Torah is a unique discipline that was given to the Jewish people.

Granted Torah is Divine wisdom, but isn't all wisdom G-d's creation? This is true especially for wisdom that is used for the observance of a Mitzvah. So the Talmudic difference between Torah and secular knowledge seems to be a difference without a distinction.

In truth, all wisdom obviously comes from G-d the Creator of the Universe.

Facial and Backside Wisdom

However, the Kabbalists teach us that there is G-d's "facial wisdom" and His "backside wisdom." This can be phrased slightly differently: There is G-d's inner wisdom that reflects His presence and true reality and there is G-d's external wisdom which conceals His presence and can only be called virtual reality.

To illustrate:

When we look at the world of nature and we see a table, the physicist will tell us it's not just one solid chunk of wood nailed together, but it consists of atoms and sub-atomic particles and indeed there is nothing there except for energy.

Our perception relative to the physicist's perception is true reality versus virtual reality.

Only the physicist who has the right instruments can discover the real composition of the table. Without his perspective we are in the dark. We see what our eyes allow us to see, but we cannot see the true reality of that object. We are in the dark.

However, eve the physicist's perception is only virtual reality because the true reality of everything physical is the Divine letters of speech that G-d is continuously uttering to keep all of creation in existence.

Even the physicist, who has empirically proven theories about the nature of the table, is in the dark because he cannot see the true underlying reality of everything.

Only Torah gives us a glimpse into G-d "face." Torah is overt G-dly wisdom. When we study Torah, with the appreciation for its Divinity, we connect to true reality. Hence the Torah is called Torah Or-the Torah of Light.

"The Sister of Lotan was Timna"

To further clarify this point, Panim Yafos, basing his words on the teachings of the Arizal referred to a verse in Genesis which describes the concubine of Esau's son Elifaz, who name was Timna. The Torah gives her family background and states: "The sister of Lotan was Timna."

Panim Yafos explains that the word sister is a metaphor as it says, "Say to wisdom you are my sister." Timna therefore represents wisdom but she is only a concubine not a full wife. If we take the name Lotan and we will see that it all of its letters are the letters that follow – Or the "backside" – for wisdom "Chochma."

In other words, the Torah is hinting to us that true wisdom, the face of wisdom can found only in Torah. However, there is also another form of wisdom that

attaches itself to Torah, its concubine, which is called Lotan.

What this message conveys is that all wisdom relative to the wisdom of Torah is called darkness because it obscures more than what it reveals.

While all wisdom, as all of existence including darkness, derives from G-d; but the other wisdoms are here to serve a higher purpose. When secular knowledge understands that its purpose is to serve as a concubine to its senior partner it has legitimacy.

This was the basis for Maimonides' mastering of Greek Philosophy. He used it as a way to help the perplexed recognize that there is no contradiction.

Cryptic Story

We can no decipher a cryptic story in the Talmud concerning the King Menashe, known for his idolatrous and murderous reign. The Talmud relates that in a dream he ridiculed the Torah's statement that "the sister of Lotan was Timna."

Why did he find this sentence so objectionable?

One may suggest that Menashe was upset that Timna was only a concubine. Metaphorically this means that he was

upset that the Torah relegated secular wisdom to a lower level; it is only the "backside" of wisdom.

The fact that Menashe in particular was upset can be explained in light of the concept expounded upon in our preceding essay that the name Menasheh implies forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is caused by a superficial attachment to a subject; when one is connected to the "backside" of wisdom.

Menashe personified the external aspect of wisdom. He was therefore vexed that the secular knowledge was given a secondary status of a concubine. To him the external was no less significant than the internal. He therefore mocked the idea that Timna was only a concubine; her position should have been more exalted.

This then was the victory of Chanukah; the triumph of light over darkness; of pure unadulterated Torah knowledge over all the other disciplines; placing them in their proper place as auxiliary to Torah.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

In previous generations, the "outside" started at the entrance to our homes.

If there was any darkness, it was not coming from within.

The Chanukah lights that were kindled on the entrances of our homes had the positive effect of bringing some light into the "street."

ESSAY THIRTEEN

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

Two Customs

The Talmud says that one should light the Menorah on the doorway going outside. The Talmud adds that it should be placed on the left side of the doorway opposite the Mezuzah which is placed on the right side of the doorway.

This custom changed, according to many sources, because of the danger posed by the enemies of the Jews and by cold climates.

As a result two customs emerged: The first is to light it near our windows so that the Chanukah light would publicize the miracle to those who are outside.

The second custom, the one adopted by many Chassidim including Chabad, is to place it on the left side of a doorway inside the house opposite the Mezuzah, which should be placed on every doorway with a few exceptions.

However, the second custom to light the Menorah inside is problematic. If the goal of Chanukah is to publicize the miracle, placing it in a conspicuous place towards the outside would be the preferred way of fulfilling this Mitzvah, and would have taken precedence over placing it opposite the Mezuzah.

Insidious Influences

There are perhaps two ways of explaining the custom of lighting the Menorah inside, despite the emphasis of Chanukah to illuminate the "outside."

The first is based on the regrettable phenomenon of all the negative influences entering our homes.

In the "olden days" a Jew knew that his home was a thoroughly Jewish, warm, inspired and insulated castle. It was a fortress of decency, morality and holiness. The home, and not the synagogue, was the focal point of Jewish life, impervious to all the alien winds that were blowing outside.

However, in modern time, partly but not entirely, due to the advent of modern technology and other factors, all of the most negative and insidious influences have penetrated into the inner sanctum of Jewish life: the home.

In previous generations, the "outside" started at the entrance to our homes. If there was any darkness, it was

not coming from within. And the Chanukah lights that were kindled on the entrances of our homes had the positive effect of bringing some light into the "street."

Illuminating the Rebels

Indeed, the Talmud states that the ideal time for lighting the Chanukah lights begins after sunset and continues until the time that the Tarmudites are no longer roaming the streets.

The Tarmudites were a sect that would linger in the street. As long as there are still people in the street it is ideal for the lighting of the Chanukah lights, the objective of which is to illuminate the darkness by publicizing the miracle to the outside.

Chassidic literature takes this Talmudic passage a step further, The Tarmudites were an evil sect that persecuted the Jews. Moreover, the very word Tarmud, when its letters are rearranged, spells the word *moredes,* which means rebel.

Thus, the meaning of lighting the Chanukah lights "until the feet of the Tarmudites cease from the street," is reinterpreted thus:

The objective of the Chanukah lights is to bring an end to the rebellious spirit that exists and prevails in the outside world.

The Outside is Inside

If the objective is to get rid of the negative atmosphere of the "outside" definition of "outside" in our own day and age, has changed; it begins within our homes. It has penetrated and has made inroads into the otherwise secure sanctuary.

We therefore have to light the Chanukah lights in our homes to intimate that we must first illuminate the darkness of the outside influences that are inside. Once we do that we can then project that light outwards.

As a caveat to the above it is interesting that while the Chabad custom is to light the Chanukah lights inside, the Rebbe has also strongly encouraged public Menorah lighting to publicize the miracle and light of Chanukah to the largest number of people so that it reaches the outside of the outside.

A Positive Explanation

This explanation, however, is based on the regrettable negative phenomenon of the insidious nature of the darkness that has entered into our homes and thus necessitates lighting the Menorah inside.

However, upon delving more deeply into the spiritual power of Chanukah lights we can discover another positive factor in the custom of lighting the Menorah inside the home.

When we discuss the concepts of "inside" and "outside" it is not restricted to good versus evil, holiness verses impurity. Even within the realm of goodness and holiness there is an inner dimension and an outer dimension.

In truth, within every level of spiritual growth there are two layers that we can refer to as "inside" and "outside."

The first such distinction is between that which transcends our intellect and the intellect.

Judaism is predicated on the reality that G-d is above and beyond the parameters of the intellect. Yet He wants us to use our intellect to internalize those supra-rational aspects of the Divine.

Light of the Future

The prime example of this dynamic of introducing the supra-rational into the mind is the kindling of the Chanukah lights. The Chanukah light, we are told by Chasidic Masters, is the light of the first day of creation, which enabled one to see from one end of the world to the other. It was a transcendent light that will be fully revealed in the Messianic Era.

This light represents the most sublime spiritual energy that cannot even be revealed during other so-called "major Holidays." Indeed, the mislabeling of Chanukah as a minor holiday is a gross distortion of the reality. According to one Midrashic source, Chanukah will be much more prominent in the Messianic Age than all the other major Holidays. The reason for this is that Chanukah is synonymous with the transcendent light of the future.

When we light the Chanukah Menorah today we create physical light that publicizes the miracle and introduces the outside world to the concept of miracles. Moreover, we unleash transcendent Divine light of the future into our souls, our homes and indeed the outside world.

Thus Chanukah's spiritual dynamic is to bring the infinite and transcendent energies into the finite parameters of the temporal world.

Where is the first point where this transition or transmission takes place?

It is from the realm of the infinite into the world of rationality.

From the vantage-point of Chanukah, rationality and logic is "outside" the pale of the supernatural and the supra-rational.

Thus lighting the Menorah inside the home hints that Chanukah is within and beyond the realm of logic. Logic, even the most abstract and spiritual logic, in relation to the trans-logical light of Chanukah is considered to be outside.

Chanukah also symbolizes the core of our souls. The Chanukah miracle started with the discovery of a concealed cruse of oil sealed with the seal of the High Priest. This, Chassidic thought teaches, represents the kindling of the core of our souls when we light the Chanukah Menorah.

While our soul's essence is beyond rationality, the soul also possesses and manifests itself through our intellect; the "inside" and "outside" aspects of our personalities, respectively.

Lighting indoors suggests that the "outside," i.e., our intellectual faculties really begin inside of our souls. They too need to be illuminated with the power that flows from our core. When this core is ignited it has the power to

affect also the soul's "outer" intellectual powers. They too are elevated to a higher level. From there it spreads to all of our other faculties and beyond.

The Light of Chanukah Preparation for Moshiach

The closer we get to the Final Redemption when our soul's essence will be fully ignited the more power we have to affect all of our "inner-outer" faculties with the light of the soul's essence. This will then become the bridge to illuminate the "outside-outside."

In earlier periods of our history when we were far from the Messianic Age, our ability to introduce the transcendent G-dly light and the essence of our souls into the finite and intellectual sphere was restricted.

Only in recent times the teachings of Chassidus, a taste of the teachings of Moshiach, were allowed to be revealed. This revolutionary change represented a watershed moment. Just as the floodgates of the inner precincts of Torah are now open so too the floodgates of our souls are open to allow the heretofore concealed core of our soul illuminate our intellect and from there our entire personalities, and ultimately to the farthest reaches of the world.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

CHANUKAH AND JEWISH EDUCATION (2)

Only by preserving the integrity of Torah, by giving our children a Torah education that emphasizes its relevance to our lives, can we dispel the darkness of exile and usher in the ultimate Redemption.

At that time, G-d will remove all the impurity from the world and "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the sea is covered by water."

ESSAY FOURTEEN

CHANUKAH AND JEWISH EDUCATION (2)

Empty Pits: A Lesson in Jewish Education

Chanukah is related to the word *chinuch*-education. The Torah reading of Vayeishev occurs either on the Shabbos before Chanukah or on the first day of Chanukah. It is no coincidence that we can find the importance of a Torah education hinted in this week's parsha.

Joseph's brothers were about to kill their own flesh and blood. Reuvein, however, convinced them not to spill his blood. Instead, he suggested, he should be thrown into an empty pit. Reuben's intention was to later return Joseph safely to his father.

The Torah describes the pit as "an empty pit, without any water." The Talmud, in its discussion of the laws of Chanukah, makes the observation that the words "without any water" are unnecessary. "If the pit was empty," the Talmud asks, "do we not know that it contained no water?"

And the Talmud answers: This is to teach us that while there was no water in the pit, there were snakes and scorpions.

What is the significance of the Torah telling us that the pit into which Joseph was thrown contained no water, but it did contain snakes and scorpions? And what eternal lesson is there in this knowledge for us?

Torah is likened to water, because like water, we cannot live without Torah; and like water which descends from High places, so too, Torah has come to us from Hashem.

When a person is devoid of Torah that is likened to water, one should not think that they are just empty and innocent. Wherever there is an absence of Torah-water, there will automatically be snakes and scorpions, i.e., harmful influences and spiritually poisonous forces that will attempt to destroy us. Without Torah, we become susceptible to all kinds of negative influences.

Giant Menorah

It is interesting that the Talmud makes this observation about the empty pit in the context of a discussion of the laws of Chanukah. The Talmud states that a Chanukah

menorah that is placed higher than twenty cubits (approximately 30 feet) above ground is not acceptable for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah. The reason for this is that a menorah placed so high is out of sight.

Commentators have grappled to understand the connection between the law about a Chanukah Menorah, out of sight, with the throwing of Joseph into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions.

Two Extremes

One explanation is that the Chanukah lights symbolize the light of Torah. There are two extremes in the way some relate to Torah, both of which are to be rejected.

There are some – as the Greeks of old – who view the Torah as being nothing more than a beautiful human artistic creation. The Greeks stripped the Torah of its holiness and its G-dly transcendent nature.

There are those who go to the opposite extreme and declare the Torah to be so spiritually high that it is out of our sight. They deny the Torah's relevance to real life "down here on earth."

By placing the Menorah – symbolizing Torah – beyond our sight, to put the Torah on a pedestal, and to regard it as being too holy for us, and therefore not relevant to us "down here," is almost as if we denied the Torah completely. The Torah, as G-d's wisdom, is relevant on all levels, and was given to us by G-d within the parameters of this physical world.

The Talmud is thus teaching us, that when one places the Torah above and beyond our reach, it is the equivalent of creating an empty pit devoid of water, or Torah, and filled with harmful creatures—snakes and scorpions. To deny any aspect of Torah's importance is to deny the totality of Torah and an invitation to all the negative forces.

Only by preserving the integrity of Torah, by giving our children a Torah education that emphasizes its relevance to our lives, can we dispel the darkness of exile and usher in the ultimate Redemption. At that time, G-d will remove all the impurity from the world and "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the sea is covered by water."

ESSAY FIFTEEN

CHANUKAH AND THE MONARCHY

A true Jewish leader—contrary to most political and religious leaders of our time—has to put the interests of his people—even of one individual—ahead of his own personal interest and prestige.

This was the hallmark of Jewish leadership throughout the ages, and this is one of the signs that we will use to determine the identity of the ultimate leader—Moshiach.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

CHANUKAH AND THE MONARCHY

What did the Hasmoneans do Wrong?

The heroes of Chanukah were a priestly clan, known as the Hasmonean family.

In the aftermath of their victory over the Syrian Greek forces and their rededication of the Temple, the Hasmoneans arrogated to themselves the role of monarchs. And while, initially, these leaders were righteous and pious men who were dedicated to making the Land of Israel reflect its original status as a G-dly land, subsequent generations of Hasmonean monarchs degenerated spiritually and had thereby sown the sins for their eventual demise. Every single member of that Hasmonean dynasty was murdered by King Herod. According to the Talmud, there was not one surviving descendent of that glorious and heroic family!

Nachmanides, the great 13th century commentator states that their extinction was a punishment for assuming the role of monarchs. He further states that they had committed a double sin:

First, it is forbidden for a Kohain-priest, whose role is strictly spiritual and Temple oriented, to serve as a monarch. The two roles must be separated.

Second, even a non-priest has an obligation to coronate a member of the Davidic dynasty, to whom the Torah promises the monarchy. And while the Hasmoneans were pious and heroic individuals without whom the miracle of Chanukah would not have occurred, nevertheless, they erred egregiously, Nachmanides writes, for not having abdicated in favor of a scion of the Davidic family.

The Distinction of the Davidic Dynasty

What is it about the Davidic family—that traces itself back to Judah, the fourth of Jacob's sons that we read about in this week's parsha—that makes them the worthy occupiers of the throne of Israel?

There were many traits that King David and his progenitor Judah possessed that made them and their kin worthy of

being the leaders of the Jewish nation. We would expect to hear an echo of Judah's uniqueness in this week's parsha, the one in which we are introduced to the adult Judah.

But, as we review the way Judah behaved in this week's parsha that was found wanting, the question can be asked, why did he deserve to become the model of leadership for all future generations?

Two Incidents

There are two incidents in this week's parsha that describe the way Judah saved a person's life. In the first narrative, the Torah relates how Joseph's brothers sought to kill him. Judah intervenes and convinces them to sell him into slavery instead. This was the first example of a leader, who overrules his older brothers and convinces them to spare Joseph's life.

And though he saved Joseph's life, this intervention did not suffice to establish his credentials as a leader. In fact, this half-baked intervention is harshly criticized by our Talmudic Sages. Indeed, they state that his brothers—upon seeing the anguish their father suffered—"demoted" Judah from his position of prominence. They felt, that had he argued for Joseph's complete freedom, they would have

complied and Jacob would have been spared this horrible ordeal of losing his beloved child.

Nevertheless, the fact that he recognized that he had erred and behaved differently in a second situation was what made him worthy as the model for ideal leadership.

In the first instance, Judah, though he saved his brother's life, he did not (a) finish the job; (b) sacrifice his own prestige or comfort to do so. One of the tests of character, and therefore of leadership, is the way one behaves when they choose the well-being of another over the protection of their own honor and reputation.

This did occur in the second narrative that involved Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Tamar's two husbands died because of their evil ways. According to existing tradition, Tamar was expected to marry Judah's third surviving son, or even Judah himself. (Marrying a widowed daughter-in-law was not yet prohibited.)

When Judah hesitated to fulfill his obligation, Tamar disguised herself as a harlot and seduced Judah from whom she conceived. In several months, when it became apparent that Tamar—who was expected to marry, and therefore considered to be semi-attached to Judah's third son, or to Judah himself—had an affair, she was convicted of "adultery" and sentenced to death. When she produced the

items that Judah gave her in lieu of payment for her "services," he readily confessed that he was the one responsible for her situation, and her life was spared. To spare himself the embarrassment caused by his confession, he could have easily denied everything. Yet Judah chose to overlook his own honor and save a life.

The fact that Judah put aside his own honor and reputation for the well-being of another proved to be his worthiness as a leader of his people. Of course, the ideal leader must possess many other qualities as well, but the fact that the first actions of Judah-the first Jewish leader—involved the saving of an individual's life, is significant.

The Hallmark of Jewish Leadership and Moshiach

A true Jewish leader—contrary to most political and religious leaders of our time—has to put the interests of his people—even of one individual—ahead of his own personal interest and prestige. This was the hallmark of Jewish leadership throughout the ages, and this is one of the signs that we will use to determine the identity of the ultimate leader—Moshiach.

When Maimonides codifies the qualifications for the Moshiach, the ultimate redeemer and leader of the Jewish

people, he includes the one about Moshiach being a descendent of King David. Not only does the Moshiach have to be an actual descendant of King David—and hence from Judah—he must also inherit their positive traits. The Moshiach is a leader who devotes his whole life, and is prepared to sacrifice everything, for even one individual who is in need.

But, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught that every one of us possesses a spark of Moshiach. In the process of Redemption through Moshiach, it is crucial that we all awaken this spark that will propel us to work for the benefit of even one individual, even when it is at the expense of our own ego and reputation.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

THE END

A dream is a world in which reality is obscured.

A dream has therefore been employed in Biblical and Talmudic literature as a metaphor for the phenomenon of exile, where the reality of G-d's existence is anything.

A dream is also a mindset that allows for one to be in two worlds simultaneously. Likewise, exile is a state of mind that allows for inconsistencies.

But the dream also contains within it the seeds of the Redemption.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

THE END

The Seeds of the Future

Chanukah always coincides with the Parsha of Miketz. There must therefore be a connection between the two.

Mikets is about the confrontation between Joseph and his brothers after he was sold into slavery and eventually made his way to become the Viceroy of Egypt.

To understand one of the connections between Chanukah and Miketz we must see the effects of the drama of Joseph and his brothers and how it played out in Jewish history.

The entire saga of Joseph and his brothers—recounted in this week's parsha — led to the Jewish nation's stay in Egypt that ultimately resulted in their enslavement and subsequent exodus. If one is to view the story that unfolds in this light—that it represents the seeds that were sown for the eventual Exodus of the Jews from Egypt and all subsequent events such as the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the conquest of Israel etc.—we can appreciate the name of this week's *parsha—Miketz.*

Literally, the word Miektz means "at the end." And it is a reference to the end of the two years Joseph languished in prison after interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh's butler.

On a deeper plane, however, it has been pointed out that the term *Miketz*-at the end" alludes to the very end, the exodus from Egypt and the ultimate end, the Messianic Age.

At first glance, this explanation appears far-fetched. What is the connection between the end of Joseph's two years in prison, followed by Pharaoh's dreams that Joseph interpreted, and the Exodus from Egypt and the future Redemption?

In light of the statement made at the beginning of this essay, however, one can readily see the connection: Joseph's freedom and his success at interpreting Pharaoh's dream, led to his meteoric rise to power and his ability to bring his father Jacob and all his progeny to Egypt, the end result of which was the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus. Hence the seeds of Redemption were already sown in the beginning of this week's parsha. And since, our Sages tell us, the Exodus from Egypt was the paradigm for all future periods of Redemption, it follows that the word "*Miketz*-in the end" and the ensuing narrative represented the potential for all future periods of liberation.

Dream Interpretation and the Exodus

There is still a need to explain the conceptual relationship between Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream and the Exodus that resulted from it many years later.

A dream is a world in which reality is obscured. A dream has therefore been employed in Biblical and Talmudic literature as a metaphor for the phenomenon of exile, where the reality of G-d's existence is anything.

A dream is also a mindset that allows for one to be in two worlds simultaneously. Likewise, exile is a state of mind that allows for inconsistencies.

If dreams are a metaphor for the exile phenomenon, Pharaoh's dream represented exile at its worst. The fat cows or stalks are devoured by the meager ones. This is a metaphor for the way the inferior ideas dominate the more spiritual and lofty ones, so much so that one does not even recognize the existence of the latter; just as in Pharaoh's dream, one could not tell that there were ever fat cows or stalks. This is exile at its lowest point.

And as we read in the Torah, none of Pharaoh's advisors could interpret his dream. In context this alludes to the fact that the predictions for disaster and hopelessness were so dire, no one could imagine that G-d could ever bring such darkness, or that if He did, that there would ever be a way out of it.

Joseph's Unique Perspective

Only Joseph was able to view the dream in a completely different light. Joseph, notwithstanding the negative way he interpreted the dream—as a prediction that there would be seven years of utter famine that would make everyone forget the seven years of plenty—Joseph proceeded with a plan that reversed everything. Moreover, not only did his plan—of storing grain—save Egypt, it actually transformed Egypt into the most vibrant economy of the entire world, because everyone had to come to Egypt to purchase grain, as is recounted in the Torah.

This "Joseph" way of interpreting the dream, is indeed the seed that leads to "*miketz*-the end." When one releases the "Joseph" of their soul out of their own internal prison and allows it to do what he does best—interpret dreams, i.e. break out of the constraints of exile—one can then transform even the darkest period of exile into "the end"—the ultimate and final Redemption.

Connection to Chanukah

As stated in the beginning of this essay, Chanukah always coincides with the parsha of *Miketz*. And Chanukah's message is indeed similar. The light of Chanukah must be lit after dark. The significance of this law is that the entire objective of Chanukah lights is to illuminate the **darkness**

of the world.

Indeed, the word "*shnasayim*—two years" that appears in this *parsha's* first verse after the word *miketz*-the end—is an acronym that alludes to Chanukah: "*Shemnoeh neiros tadlik, yemin mezuzah*-light eight candles; on the right is the Mezuzah." This is a reference to the practice of placing the Menorah on the left side of the door opposite the Mezuzah.

But, the deeper connection is that while the Mezuzah is a force that strengthens the "right"—the forces of goodness that are referred to symbolically, in rabbinic literature, as being on the right—the Chanukah light is what takes the "left"—symbolic of the negative forces—and transforms them into positive. And all this follows the word *miketz*-the end.

Which leads us to another hint: Our Sages also inform us that even after the "end of days," in the Messianic Age, when all other Holidays will no longer be significant, Chanukah will still stand out as a great Holiday. Thus, the allusion to Chanukah follows the word "the end" to indicate that even after the end of days, Chanukah will still shine brightly.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

GROUNDED LIGHT

When a person realizes that a miracle occurred, ironically, the more phenomenal the miracle is, the more the miracle is disconnected to our own world of reality, the less of an impact it will have.

Only when a miracle is somehow anchored in our own sense of reality do we have the capacity to "fathom" the miracle and apply it to our lives.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

GROUNDED LIGHT

A Recurring Question

One of the recurring questions found in Jewish literature concerning the Holiday of Chanukah is why we observe it for **eight** days. According to the Talmud, when the Maccabees entered the temple and sought to kindle the huge candelabrum—which was previously lit each and every evening—they discovered only one cruse of oil that was suitable for this ritual. All the other oil was contaminated. The problem was that it would take another seven days to replenish their supply of oil.

When they used the lone jug of oil for the first night, a miracle occurred and it lasted for the entire eight nights. This, ostensibly, is the reason that we celebrate Chanukah for eight days.

The question thus is: If they found one jug that had a sufficient supply of oil for at least one night, and there was no miracle on the first night, why then is Chanukah not a seven day celebration?

Literally hundreds of answers have been provided for this matter, each adding a novel insight or lesson for us in our own subjective understanding of Chanukah.

One way of answering this question is as follows:

An Anchored Miracle

When a person realizes that a miracle occurred, ironically, the more phenomenal the miracle is, the more the miracle is disconnected to our own world of reality, the less of an impact it will have. Only when a miracle is somehow anchored in our own sense of reality do we have the capacity to "fathom" the miracle and apply it to our lives.

The reason for this can be twofold: First, when one observes a miracle that is so out of the realm of the natural, there tends to be a feeling of skepticism as to whether it really happened. The more supernatural an event, the greater number of doubters emerge.

Second, since we are basically finite creatures, subject to the rules of nature, it is hard for us to find meaning in a phenomenon that defies our frame of reference. And even if we harbor no doubts about the veracity of the miracle, we cannot relate to it. As a result, we usually "file" that miracle in a part of our consciousness that is not connected to other parts of our personality. The miracle, notwithstanding its magnificence—nay, because of its

magnificence—will have little or no impact on our lives.

The Miracle of Relating to a Miracle

We can now understand why Chanukah is a **eight** day Holiday despite the fact that the miracle lasted for only seven days. Were it not for the first day—when the cruse of oil that was discovered enabled them to light the menorah in a natural way—from which the miracle of the additional seven days ensued, they could not really relate to the miracle.

If miraculously, the Menorah would have produced light without having any oil whatsoever, the miracle would have blown their minds and yielded virtually no long-term effects, because the miracle would have been so mind-boggling, rendering it irrelevant because it would be impossible to assimilate it into one's "normal" existence.

Hence, by having the miracle follow a rather natural event—lighting of the one cruse of foil they found and burnt naturally—the miracle was anchored and had the effect of bringing light into the prosaic aspects of our lives.

Higher than 20 Cubits

We can also now understand a passage in the Talmud that states: "A Chanukah menorah that is placed higher than twenty cubits (approximately 30 feet) above ground is not

acceptable for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah." The reason for this is that a menorah placed so high is out of sight.

Besides its literal meaning, "out of sight" here can also mean, out of the framework of our reality. A person who views Chanukah as an utterly transcendent experience that has not bearing on our lives, has missed the essential point of Chanukah—to bring the light of Chanukah into every aspect of our lives and not to compartmentalize the miracle.

Reconciling Messianic Predictions

Concerning the Messianic Age, Maimonides states that there will be a natural world. The sole difference between life today and life in the future is that then we will enjoy total freedom, which will allow us to devote our lives to the higher spiritual pursuits unencumbered by the constraints that go along with a lack of freedom.

How do we reconcile this rather down-to-earth description of the future Messianic Age with other Biblical, Talmudic and even Maimonidean quotes that we will all be exposed to an unprecedented awareness of G-dly light?

The answer is that the most transcendent G-dly light — represented by the light of Chanukah — will not take us away from our natural selves, it will illuminate every facet

of our lives. Just as the miracle of Chanukah was grounded in our reality, so too the G-dly reality to be revealed in the Messianic Age, will be linked to and manifested within our natural world. It will become a part of us, rather than to negate our existence. We will then enjoy a perpetual Chanukah. A Happy Chanukah!

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

FAT IS THE CULPRIT

When the Holy Temple was recaptured by the famed Maccabees, they searched for a bottle of oil that still had the High Priest's seal.

Although they were allowed to use tainted oil, they would not do so, for then they would have won the war but lost the battle.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

FAT IS THE CULPRIT

Defiling the Oil

Every war ever waged was basically for power or money except for one. The war which the Greeks waged against the Jews over 2,000 years ago was waged for oil. Olive oil to be exact.

It wasn't Jewish money the Greeks were after. Had they been after our wealth, they would have emptied the Holy temple. But the Greeks did not strip the Holy temple clean. They defiled it. They offered pigs as sacrifices on the altar. And they opened the little bottles of pure olive oil that were used daily to kindle the seven-branched menorah.

Weren't those Greeks dumb to leave the wealth but despoil the oil? No, they weren't so stupid.

The Greeks were content to let the Jewish people live. They knew from looking at our first 2,000 years of miraculous existence that we could not be destroyed. And they were wise, so they accepted this fact. What they could not accept

was that there is something higher than the mind, something more sublime than human wisdom, something greater than their deities who were no better than people save their immortality.

All of this was symbolized by the purity of the olive oil. The Greeks did not totally destroy the oil for doing so would not have allowed them to realize their ultimate goal.

They defiled the oil by breaking the seals. And their message to the Jews was loud and clear: "Go ahead, use the oil now. Use the impure oil in your menorah; we don't believe that there is such a thing as purity. There is no such thing as spirituality. There is no such thing as an All-knowing, All-powerful G-d. Man is the apex, man's understanding is the utmost, man's physical prowess and power is the peak.

But the Jews refused to give in to the Greeks physically or spiritually. When the Holy Temple was recaptured by the famed Macabees, they searched for a bottle of oil that still had the High Priest's seal. Although they were allowed to use this tainted oil they would not do so, for then they would have won the war but lost the battle.

Just as the Greeks made a statement by defiling the oil, the Jews made just as strong of a statement by refusing to use that oil. They cried, "we believe that there is something higher than our own intellect, we believe in the All-powerful, All-knowing G-d, we believe that eventually good will prevail

and that G-d will ultimately bring the time when everything will be totally pure, forever more."

The main custom of Chanukah--lighting the Menorah--revolves around oil, thus commemorating the miracle of the small bottle which lasted not one, but eight days and also commemorating the strength of the Jewish spirit.

The Secrets of the Torah

But oil is significant for another reason, a reason which gives us additional insight into oil's message in our lives in general and the Chanukah miracle in particular.

Oil, like wine, symbolizes the secrets of the Torah, the mystical aspects of Judaism. These formerly hidden concepts are becoming more revealed as we come closer to Moshiach's imminent arrival. For the Messianic Era will be a time when all of the Torah's secrets will be revealed for everyone to grasp.

Until the moment comes when Moshiach is anointed with the sacred oil, however, it is imperative that each of us learns as much of the "oil" of Torah as possible, thus preparing ourselves for Moshiach's imminent arrival

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE DREIDEL REVISITED

We have been told that the numerical value of the four letters of the Dreidel are the equivalent of the word Moshiach.

Moshiach's coming is very much connected to our appreciation for the miracles of the past as enduring expressions of G-d's presence in our lives, now and here.

When this is properly acknowledged, we are ready for Moshiach.

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE DREIDEL REVISITED

The Rules of the Game

Chanukah is associated with lighting a Menorah. Whenever we deal with light we are talking serious business.

Chanukah is also associated with eating latkes. While not as spiritual as lighting the Menorah, food is a very important part of any Jewish holiday.

But the Dreidel? Isn't it just a children's game? Why is this apparently infantile exercise deserving of our time and attention during Chanukah?

To better understand the significance of the Dreidel, let us first describe its features. First of all,. It is not round as most tops, but rather four-sided. Second, each of the four sides is marked with letters spelling out the Chanukah miracle. The four letters are: *nun, gimmel, hei* and *shin*. These four letters are the initials of the four words: *Nes Gadol Haya Sham*—"a great miracle happened (lit. was) there."

Now, when children (or children at heart) play Dreidel the rules that are followed universally are as follows: When the

Dreidel is spun and it lands on the letter *nun*—which stands for "miracle"—one does not put anything in the pot, neither does one take anything out of the pot. When it lands on a *gimmel*—which stands for "great"—one takes **all** of the pot. A fallen *hei*—which represents the word "was"—entitles the spinner to take half of the pot. However, if one hapless individual gets a *shin*, standing for the word "there", one is a complete loser because he takes nothing but must give by adding to the pot.

Whatever the origins of the rules of the game, Jewish custom has essentially made it an integral part of Dreidel and Dreidel has become an integral part of Chanukah. And, as the Ba'al Shem Tov taught us, everything that we hear or see must teach us a lesson in life regarding the way we express our Judaism. What is the lesson from these rules?

The Message of the letter "Nun"

Let's begin with the *nun*.

The rule regarding the *nun* appears rather strange. If the letter *nun* stands for the word miracle, why does one not get anything out of the miracle?

The answer lies in the nature of a miracle. While a miracle is something that comes in handy, a miracle is something that is often one sided. It is an act of G-d that is totally beyond our grasp. Unless we do something to harness the

miracle to our lives, to have it continue to inspire us even days, weeks, months and years after the miracle first occurred, it is a sterile miracle. The miracle remains aloof and does not really contribute to our lives. It is a *nun* that gives us nothing of real and enduring value.

This explains the statement in the Talmud that after the original Chanukah miracle occurred they waited a year before establishing the holiday of Chanukah as a day of thanksgiving and praise. What was the purpose of waiting a year? Why couldn't they establish the Holiday of Chanukah the year in which the miracle first occurred?

The answer is that they wanted to see if the miracle would continue to inspire them a year later. If it did, it proved that this miracle was one that deserved to be acknowledged and established as a permanent Holiday.

The Message of the Letter Gimmel

However, when we get to the letter *gimmel*, which means great, we take everything. The difference between a miracle and a "great miracle" is the degree to which we acknowledge its presence in our lives. The Talmud states that there are countless miracles that come our way that we are not even aware that they exist. Other miracles catch our attention for a fleeting moment but do not have a major impact on us. When a miracle is "great" it means

that it was duly acknowledged and elicited a powerful response from us, even a year, or, for that matter, thousands of years later. This kind of a miracle allows us to "take" everything. We become all around winners.

The Message of the Letter Hei

However, when we appreciate the miracle for its historical value, as an important event of the past—something that "was"—we can only take half of what the miracle has to offer.

This is the message that we can derive from the letter hei, the initial of the word haya-*was.* It represents the person who sees Chanukah in its historical context and learns invaluable lessons from it for the present.

To be sure, appreciating the historical value of a miracle will prompt us to learn invaluable lessons from that event, in the manner as we always try to learn lessons from all historical events. But, since it is only viewed as a matter of the past, we can only get a portion of the benefits that accrue from the miracle.

Only when we can still feel the presence of the miracle in our lives, thousands of years after its occurrence, do we get the *gimmel*, the full measure of the miracle's greatness and impact—we take everything.

The Message of the Letter Shin

But when we view the miracle of Chanukah, not only as a event of bygone years, but we look at it as something that happened "there," far away from us—not as something that has relevance to our lives—then we are left with a *shin*, which requires of us to put something in the pot. Whenever we come across an attitude like that our work is cut out for us. We must put something in to the pot, i.e., expend much energy to appreciate the viability of the miracle in our day and in our lives. Otherwise we get nothing from the miracle.

Numerical Value=Moshiach

We have been told that the numerical value of the four letters of the Dreidel are the equivalent of the word Moshiach. Moshiach's coming is very much connected to our appreciation for the miracles of the past as enduring expressions of G-d's presence in our lives, now and here. When this is properly acknowledged, we are ready for Moshiach.

ESSAY TWENTY
CHANUKAH: MAJOR OR MINOR LEAGUES?

The light of Chanukah is representative of the light G-d created the first day of creation.

This light was not sunlight but a spiritual force too powerful for an imperfect world to experience and enjoy, so, our sages tell us, G-d concealed this light for the future Messianic Age.

However, when the Hasmoneans demonstrated unparalleled devotion to G-d in their rebellion against the encroachment of Greek values, they helped to generate this hidden light.

ESSAY TWENTY

CHANUKAH: MAJOR OR MINOR LEAGUES?

A Kernel of Truth

Chanukah is generally regarded as a "minor" Jewish Holiday. This perception was undoubtedly engendered by three factors.

Firstly -- and the only kernel of truth in this perception -- Chanukah has no work restrictions as do other Holidays such as Passover, Rosh Hashanah, etc.

Secondly, Chanukah historically is rooted in a military victory. Many Jews who have grown up in the Vietnam era with its distaste for militarism feel uncomfortable with a Holiday celebrating military prowess.

Thirdly, Chanukah's proximity to the "other" non-Jewish holiday with its emphasis on gift giving and commercialism has prompted some Jewish functionaries to minimize the importance of Chanukah. The objective was to discourage Jewish children and adults from being under the influence of the non-Jewish culture within which we live.

In truth, however, Chanukah is not only a major Holiday, but it is unique even among other Major Jewish Holidays. This assertion is based on the Midrash which states that in the future Messianic Age, when all other Holidays will no longer shine so brilliantly, Chanukah will still be around as a major Festival. Chanukah's message, our sages tell us, defies the constraints of time.

Whether in exile or in a period of Redemption, Chanukah's light will not be extinguished our out-shined.

The Uniqueness of Chanukah

What is it about Chanukah that is so unique?

The light of Chanukah is representative of the light G-d created the first day of creation. This light was not sunlight but a spiritual force which enabled people to see from one end of the world to the other. This light was too powerful for an imperfect world to experience and enjoy, so, our sages tell us, G-d concealed this light for the future Messianic Age.

However, when the Hasmoneans demonstrated unparalleled devotion to G-d in their rebellion against the encroachment of Greek values, they helped to generate this hidden light.

Every time we light Chanukah candles we gain access to this hidden force and are given a taste of the light that we will experience fully in the near future.

This light is characterized by its purity and integrity. The Holiday of Chanukah thus is a Holiday which reaches into the essence of our souls and elicits the most pure and sincere feelings of closeness to our G-d and our people. This kind of light can never be extinguished and portends the light of the future. (See following essay for a fuller treatment of the uniqueness of Chanukah.)

A Happy Chanukah to all!

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

A HEAVENLY SYMPHONY

Of all the Holidays, Chanukah stands out because it reveals a deeper part of our soul's treasure than most other Holidays.

This will dispel the myth that Chanukah is a minor holiday.

A Holiday that can touch and kindle the soul of can touch soul of every Jew and reveal the uncontaminated core of every Jew is not minor.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

A HEAVENLY SYMPHONY

Three Kinds of Jews

Miriam goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Chanukah cards and she says to the cashier, 'May I have 50 Chanukah stamps?'

The cashier says, 'What denomination?'

Miriam says, 'Oy vey, has it come to this? OK, give me 6 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, and 32 Reform.'

In truth, there are three kinds of Jews.

There are Jews who don't realize that that they are in possession of an exquisite treasure.

There are Jews who are aware of the existence of a treasure but have not made an effort to access it. Perhaps they

might take out a few pennies here are there, but leave the bulk the treasure untouched.

The third category includes Jews of all strips who are well aware if the treasure they possess and who benefit from it.

Every one of us possesses a soul, a spark of the Divine. It is a veritable treasure. We may compare it to a beautiful piece of art or a symphony, whose conductor is none other than G-d Himself.

To hear the symphony of the soul we have Holidays. Each Holiday has the capacity to elicit some of the celestial music embedded in the core of our being.

The Uniqueness of Chanukah

Of all the Holidays, Chanukah stands out because it reveals a deeper part of our soul's treasure than most other Holidays. This will dispel the myth that Chanukah is a minor holiday. A Holiday that can touch and kindle the soul of can touch soul of every Jew and reveal the uncontaminated core of every Jew is not minor.

To better understand the uniqueness of Chanukah we ought to focus on the emphasis of Chanukah as an **8** day Holiday, as opposed to Passover and Sukkos which are

seven day Holidays (Shemini Atzeres, the eighth day of Sukkos is actually a separate and independent Holiday.)

The number seven symbolizes the natural order; that which is conventional and "normal." The number eight represents that which is supra-rational, unconventional, transcendent and out of the box.

We are taught that King David's harp had seven strands; the harp of Moshiach will have eight strands because the Messianic Age will introduce us to the transcendent G-dly light.

Chanukah too is related to the idea of eight, which transcends nature and all that is conventional and "normal." Chanukah is an eight day Holiday and we kindle a Menorah consisting of eight branches. Even the Menorah in the Bais Hamikdash consisted of seven branches..

Chanukah excavates our psyche and reaches deep into our core, our essence.

Chanukah is when we can access the hidden treasure and hear the beautiful, heavenly music of our neshama.

The Chanukah Symphony

Every Jew, without exception, produces a beautiful note.

However, when we are united, particularly during Chanukah, we create a beautiful symphony; and nowhere is the symphony more Heavenly; a taste of the future, than in the glow of Chanukah.

It is our challenge to bring every Jew to bask in the light of Chanukah, including the eighth night in which the transcendent nature of Chanukah is most evident.

There is no greater feeling of joy than Jews of all stripes getting together to celebrate community service and to honor people who are devoted to bringing light to the world in the glow of Chanukah.

This message of hearing the symphony is more pronounced in a year of Hakhel, the post Sabbatical year, when Jews would be gathered in the Holy Temple to hear the reading of the Torah. This is an especially auspicious time for Jews to gather for the purpose of accessing and spreading light.

If there was ever a time that we needed the light of Chanukah it is today; tonight. With all the darkness in the world; with the terrorism in our country and in Israel, we need the light of Chanukah to dispel the darkness.

The Fifth Night

The message of Chanukah is especially potent on the fifth night. There is something unique about the fifth night. The Rebbe pointed out that it can never occur on a Shabbos. It highlights the power of the Chanukah lights to illuminate a night that ostensibly doesn't have the potential to become holy.

It's intriguing that the word light is the 25th word of the Torah, and Chanukah occurs on the 25th day of the month of Kislev.

It's even more fascinating that the word or-light appears in the Torah 8 times. And the last time it appears is in the context of the plague of darkness, where the Torah states that despite the darkness "There was light for all of the children of Israel in their dwellings."

A Chanukah Question

Chanukah is cognate to the word chinuch, which means education. And asking questions is crucial for students who want to learn. And there is no holiday in which questions have been asked more than Chanukah.

There is one question about which hundreds of answers have been given. Each answer uncovers another dimension of light.

The question is: Why do we observe Chanukah for 8 days when the miracle was really only for seven. After all, they had enough oil for one night.

Interestingly, this question was first raised about 700 years ago by a rabbi whose known as the M'eiri, which means the giver of light, and this question resurfaced a few hundred years later and was asked by Rabbi Yosef Karo whose name Yosef means to increase alluding to the way we increase the light from night to night, and indeed, their question precipitated untold light and enlightenment about Chanukah.

I'd like to offer an answer to the question that sheds light on the power of Chanukah to bring light to every nook and cranny of the world.

The Kabbalists teach us that the Menorah in the Temple which had seven branches corresponded to the seven personality types. Some of us respond to the love and kindness of Judaism; some to the discipline and morality. Some Jews are attracted to the beauty of its teachings and some are inspired by its endurance; to have weathered the test of time. Some are impressed by a sense of gratitude

for all that G-d has given us and feel a need to reciprocate by expressing gratitude to G-d.

There are those who just crave to be connected to G-d, which they can only through the Mitzvos and prayer. And there are some who want to be Jewish just because they feel that this is what our King wants us to do. They are soldiers in G-d's army.

There are a total of seven emotions of characteristics, and invariably when they lit the Menorah in the Temple in illuminates the souls of all seven personality types.

But there is an eighth category: the Jew to whom Jewish teaching, practice and ideals do not resonate at all. These are the Jews, whose only Jewishness is buried deep into their psyche and are not even aware of its presence. These are the Jews who are unaware of Shabbos, which is associated with the number seven. These are the people that the light of the Temple Menorah could not reach them. They are like the fifth child who does not come to the Seder, which parallels the fifth night which can never occur on a Shabbos.

The miracle of Chanukah is that its light can touch everyone. And that is why it is an eight day Holiday despite the fact that the miracle was only for seven days. The mere fact that they found the cruse of oil, symbolizing the

hidden, uncontaminated core of our souls is the greatest miracle. That is the power of eight.

Chanukah brings together and ignites the soul of all eight categories of Jews and prepares them for the Final Redemption through Moshiach who is also identified in the Talmud as being connected to the number eight.

Have a happy Chanukah!

CHANUKAH QUIZZES

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QUIZ ONE

For each number (1-13) identify an aspect of Chanukah that corresponds to that number:

1- One cruse of uncontaminated oil they found. *kaa'ret kesef achas* etc

2- Blessings second night and onward, *bakar shnayim* etc

3- Blessings, levels of observance,

4- Sides and letters of *dreidel*

5- Number of Maccabbees, rams etc. of *korbonos hanesiim*

6-Number of Mitzvos one is surrounded with while lighting the Menorah. 1) Menorah 2) Mezuzah (3-6) Tzitzis; Matisyahu and his sons; number of days of traveling to get fresh oil

7- Number of lights in Temple Menorah, Channah and 7 sons, time to manufacture new oil, time for purification, actual days of nes

8- Number of days of Chanukah; number of lights; days of bris, which was banned

9- Number of candles on last night including Shamosh

10-Number of *menorot* King Solomon made. Weight of golden spoon for ketores in chanukas hanesiim. Should be below 10 tefachim

11- The day of the Nasi of Asher from whose territory oil came

12- We read the dedicatory sacrifices of the 12 leaders of tribes during Chanukah

13- The Greeks made 13 breaches in the Temple wall. *Beha'alotecha* follows 12 *nesi'im*, 13 tribes including Levi.

QUIZ TWO

1) The word Chanukah means: (a) holiness (b) freedom (c) dedication (d) joy

2) Chanukah is an eight day holiday because:

(a) the battle against the Greeks took eight days

(b) the lone cruse of oil they found miraculously lasted eight days, the time it took to get a fresh supply of oil

(c) there were eight McAbee brothers who led the rebellion against the Greeks

(d) there were eight battles the Jews won

3) Some people prefer using olive oil instead of candles because:

(a) olive oil is the cheapest fuel available

(b) olive oil is the most expensive fuel available

(c) the miracle occurred with olive oil

(d) Israel's main import is olive oil

4) We recite three blessings the first night of Chanukah and only two on subsequent nights because:

(a) the third blessing of Shehecheyanu is only recited the first day of a holiday

(b) the rabbis did not want to burden us with too many blessings

(c) we add a blessing on the first night to thank G-d for the military victory

(d) we add a blessing on the first night of Chanukah to thank G-d for the Latkes

5) We light the menorah at night because:

(a) that is when they lit it in the Temple (b) light is more noticeable at night

(c) more people are home at night (d) all of the above

6) We use a ninth candle known as the Shamosh because:

(a) it comes in handy as a spare

(b) we may not benefit from the light of the other candles

(c) its easier to light the menorah with another candle than with a match

(d) it memorializes all the Jews who died in the battles against the Greeks

7) We may not derive benefit from the Chanukah candles because:

(a) they are a fire hazard

(b) in the olden days candles were made from non-kosher fat

(c) they can be very messy

(d) they are holy and are intended only for the publicizing of the miracle

8) The reason we light one candle the first night, two the second night, and so on, is:

(a) to constantly increase the way we perform the mitzvah

(b) to save money

(c) to show solidarity with the poor who cannot afford to light all eight

(d) all of the above

9) We light the menorah in the synagogue as well as in the home:

(a) so that people should not neglect to come to the synagogue

(b) to reach a larger number of people

(c) to teach people how to light the menorah

(d) to emulate the lighting of the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple)

10) We eat latkes on Chanukah because:

(a) latkes were eaten by the Maccabees when they were hiding in their caves

(b) potatoes were the only food that Eastern European Jews had

(c) the Maccabees used potatoes as a weapon against the enemy

(d) they are fried in oil which reminds us of the miracle with oil

11) It is customary for parents to give their children Chanukah Gelt:

(a) because it helps to educate children to give tzedakah

(b) because it keeps the children happy

(c) to compete with the non-Jewish custom of giving gifts

(d) to teach them about the importance of saving money

12) We eat dairy foods on Chanukah because:

(a) because the Maccabee fighters did not have access to a shochet and were forced to eat dairy

(b) Yehudah Hamaccabee was a vegetarian

(c) Israel is known for Milk and Honey and Chanukah is a holiday that occurred in Israel as opposed to all other Biblical and rabbinical holidays.

(d) A major victory occurred through dairy foods. Yehudit fed the Greek general with salty cheese and then gave him wine to quench his thirst. When he fell asleep from the wine, she decapitated him.

13) We play dreidel on Chanukah because:

(a) it reminds us of the heroism of the Jewish children who risked their lives to study Torah. When Greek sentries would come to spy on them they would take out their tops and play.

(b) it provides children with a means to make money

(c) it keeps the children distracted when the parents light the Chanukah candles.

(d) the word sevivon has the same numerical value as the word Chanukah

14) The Dreidel consists of the four letters:

(a) nun, gimmel, hei, tav (b) nun, gimmel, chet, shin
(c) nun, gimmel, hei, shin (d) nun, gimmel, samach, shin

15) We light the Chanukah candles before lighting the Shabbos candles because:

(a) Chanukah candles are more important

(b) By lighting Shabbos candles we usher in the Shabbos and we may not light any fire.

(c) it gives men time to go to Shabbos services

(d) Chanukah candles must be lit a half hour before sunset and Shabbos candles 18 minutes before sunset

QUIZ THREE

1) One of the meanings of the word Chanukah is:

(a) holiness

(b) freedom

(c) they rested on the 25th

(d) light

2) The miracle of Chanukah occurred in the:

(a) Mishkan (tabernacle) the Jews had in the desert

(b) Tabernacle at Shilo

(c) First Temple

(d) Second Temple

3) Three Jewish practices the Greeks outlawed were:

(a) Circumcision, Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh

(b) Circumcision, Shabbos, Passover

(c) Circumcision, Kashrut, tzedakah

(d) Bar Mitzvah, Kashrut, Mikveh

4) The Jews who supported the Greeks and their attempts at changing Judaism were known as the:

(a) Sadducees

(b) Karaites

(c) Hellenists

(d) Hiksos

5) Chanukah is an eight-day holiday because:

(a) the battle against the Greeks took eight days

(b) the lone cruse of oil they found miraculously lasted eight days, the time it took to get a fresh supply of oil

(c) there were eight McAbee brothers who led the rebellion against the Greeks

(d) there were eight battles the Jews won

6) The laws of Chanukah were not included in the Mishnah because:

(a) it is only a minor holiday

(b)the laws of Chanukah were well known and there was no need to put it into writing

(c) Chanukah occurred after the Mishnah was written
(d) There are no laws for Chanukah, just customs

7) Some people prefer using olive oil instead of candles because:

(a) olive oil is the cheapest fuel available

(b) olive oil is the most expensive fuel available

(c) the miracle occurred with olive oil

(d) Israel's main export is olive oil

8) We use a ninth candle known as the Shamosh because:

(a) it comes in handy as a spare

(b) we may not benefit from the light of the other candles

(c) it's easier to light the menorah with another candle than with a match
(d) it memorializes the Jews who died in the battles against the Greeks

9) Women have a custom to do something extra for Chanukah such as:
(a) lighting an extra candle

(b) giving extra tzedakah

(c) making latkes

(d) desisting from domestic chores while the candles burn

10) (Two correct answers): The reason women have this added observance is because:

(a) they were oppressed by the Greeks more than the men

(b) one of the major turning points and miracles occurred through a woman

(c) women are compensated for not having to observe all the Mitzvos

(d) women demanded more participation

11) We may not derive benefit from the Chanukah candles because they:

(a) are a fire hazard

(b) were once made from non-kosher fat

(c) can be very messy

(d) are holy and are intended only for the publicizing of the miracle

12) The reason we light one candle the first night, two the second night, and so on is to:

(a) constantly increase the way we perform the mitzvah
(b) save money
(c)show solidarity with the poor who cannot afford to light all eight
(d) all of the above

13) We light the menorah in the synagogue as well as in the home to

(a) encourage synagogue attendance
(b) reach a larger number of people
(c) teach people how to light the menorah
(d) emulate the lighting of the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple)

14) We eat latkes on Chanukah because:

(a) potatoes were the only food that Eastern European Jews had

(b) the Maccabees used potatoes as a weapon against the enemy

(c) they are fried in oil which reminds us of the miracle with oil

(d) one of the Maccabees was named Cholesterol

15) It is customary for parents to give their children Chanukah Gelt:

(a) to encourage our children towards furthering their Jewish education

(b) because it keeps the children happy

(c) to compete with the non-Jewish custom of giving gifts

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(d) the word *sevivon* has the same numerical value as the word Chanukah

18) In Israel the Dreidel consists of the four letters:

(a) nun, gimmel, hei, tav

(b) nun, gimmel, hei, pei

(c) nun, gimmel, hei, shin

(d) nun, gimmel, samach, shin

19) We light the Chanukah candles before lighting the Shabbos candles because:

(a) Chanukah candles are more important

(b) by lighting Shabbos candles we usher in the Shabbos and we may not light any fire.

(c) it gives men time to go to Shabbos services

(d) Chanukah candles must be lit a half-hour before sunset and Shabbos candles 18 minutes before sunset

20) We light the menorah at night because:

(a) that is when they lit it in the Temple
(b) light is more noticeable at night

(c) more people are home at night
(d) all of the above

21) We recite three blessings the first night of Chanukah and only two on subsequent nights because:

(a) the third blessing of Shehecheyanu is only recited the first day of a holiday

(b) the rabbis did not want to burden us with too many blessings

(c) we add a blessing on the first night to thank G-d for the military victory

(d) we add a blessing on the first night of Chanukah to thank G-d for the Latkes

22) The total number of candles we light – except the Shamosh is:

(a) 18

(b) 26

(c) 36

(d) 49

23) The significance of this number is that it corresponds to:

(a) the number of hours Adam experienced the light that G-d cretaed on the first day
(b) the number of ounces the cruse of oil contained
(c) the number of Matathias' grandchildren
(d) the numerical equivalent to the word light in Hebrew
(e) the last two digits of Yehudah HaMaccabee's social security number.

24) The School of Shammai maintains that we should light:

(a) one candle each night
(b) in descending order
(c) 8 candles each night
(d) only the first night of Chanukah, the rest is optional

25) Initially, the place to put the Chanukah menorah was:

(a) In the window
(b) on the table, inside the house
(c) on the right side of the entrance to the house
(d) on the left side of the entrance to the house

26) The additional prayer the rabbis instituted to be said during the Amidah prayer on Chanukah is called:

(a) The Star Spangled Banner

(b) Ya'aleh v'yavo

(c) Maoz Tzur Yeshuati

(d) Al Hanissim

27) The Chanukah candles must burn at least:

(a) 18 minutes after dark

(b) 30 minutes after dark

(c) 36 minutes after dark

(d) 1 hour after dark

28) The Chanukah candles:

(a) must be different colors
(b) must be red, green and yellow
(c) must be blue and white
(d) could be any color

29) The following two things we may not do on Chanukah:
(a) eat meat and drink wine
(b) fast and eulogize
(c) eulogize and work
(d) work and fast

30) One of the answers to the question as to why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, if there was sufficient oil for at least the first day, is:
(a) the Maccabees liked the number eight because they were the eight generation from Ezra the Scribe

(b) the oil was divided into eight parts and each night the oil lasted for the entire night

(c) there were eight battles that the Maccabees won.

(d) to distinguish it from the Holiday of Sukkot and Passover which has seven days

31) The Maccabees did not want to use the oil they found in the Temple because:

(a) Jewish law forbids use of defiled oil

(b) the Greeks added water to all the oil that made it impossible to use

(c) the Greeks used the oil for idol worship

(d) there was nothing wrong with using defiled oil, but they wanted to do the mitzvah in the most pure way

32) The first hint in the Torah to Chanukah is the word "Let there be light." :It is a reference to Chanukah because it is:

(a) the 25th word of the Torah

(b) the 36th word of the Torah

(c) 45th word of the Torah

(d) 89th – gematria of chanukah – word of the Torah

33) One primary difference between the Chanukah candles and the Shabbos candles is that:

(a) we may not benefit from Chanukah candles but we may benefit from Shabbos candles

(b) we may not benefit from Chanukah candles but we must benefit from Shabbos candles

(c) Chanukah candles must be made for Chanukah specifically, Shabbos candles can be any candles
(d) On Chanukah we may use oil, on Shabbos we must use only candles

(e)) all of the above

34) One primary difference between the Chanukah candles and the havdalah candle is that:

(a) the Chanukah candle we may not benefit from but we may benefit from the havdalah candle (b) the havdalah candle should have a few wicks together, the Chanukah menorah should have each wick burn separately
(c) havdalah commemorates the first time fire was created naturally and Chanukah lights commemorate a miraculous light
(d) all of the above

35) The numerical value of the four letters on the dreidel is the same as the word:

(a) Moshiach

(b) Moshe

(c) Yehudah

(d) Shemen (oil)

36) If a candle extinguishes before the prescribed time for it to burn:

(a) one must rekindle it if it is a weekday, not on the Shabbos

(b) one must not rekindle it ever

(c) one does not have to rekindle it ever, but may do so on a weekday

(d) must ask someone else to light the menorah for you.

QUIZ FOUR

1. KAUHCHNA-The name of the Holiday

2. EAIINCTODD-The meaning of Chanukah

3. KGESRE-The enemy

4. EVIOL IOL-The fuel

5. YANHHHUCEEES-The third blessing

6. OMHHASS-The ninth candle

7. ETB IELLLH-The rabbis who demanded increase

8. KTSLAE- Chanukah food

9. LDEEIRD- Chanukah toy

10. HHOASIMC -The light of Chanukah is the light of____

11. RYIDA Type of food eaten on Chanukah

12. ETGL -We give to children

13. NOERAHM-Chanukah object

14. EYTNTW ITHFF-The date of Chanukah

15. SKIEVL-Month of Chanukah

16. IIRSEUPM ISNA- Publicizing the miracle

17. AMANLI SHIKODBE-Ascend in holiness

18. NNU MGIEL IHE HISN-Letters of the dreidel

19. IBAT MDASHIKHA-The location of the miracle

20. SHRO HHOESCD-Banned by the enemy
21. WETNYT UBSCTI-maximum height of Menorah
22. SSNAEAHOMN-The good guys
23. APHC MEEHSN- Was found with the seal of the Kohain Gadol
24. LA SSIIMANH-Chanukah prayer
25. EAUYHHD-Chanukah hero
26. THEUIYD-Chanukah heroine
27. ATTAHUMYI- Priest
28. CECEAMAB-Slogan of heroes
29. AZOM ZURT-Chanukah hymn

30. AANNHC DAN RHE EEVSN SSNO-Gave their lives

31. YTHIRT IXS – number of candles

32. SAIYR-Where the enemy came from

33. UOIANSHTC-The evil king

34. OIMIND--Where the rebellion began

35. NCCCIIOIMRSU-Banned by the enemy

36. NEOMW-Had a special role

QUIZ FIVE

Coded message using the Chanukah-Bet Shammai-Mezuzah code

Bok oizktp koxgrxsg jksxht xqznjw bqv l ogutb eiiuapek.